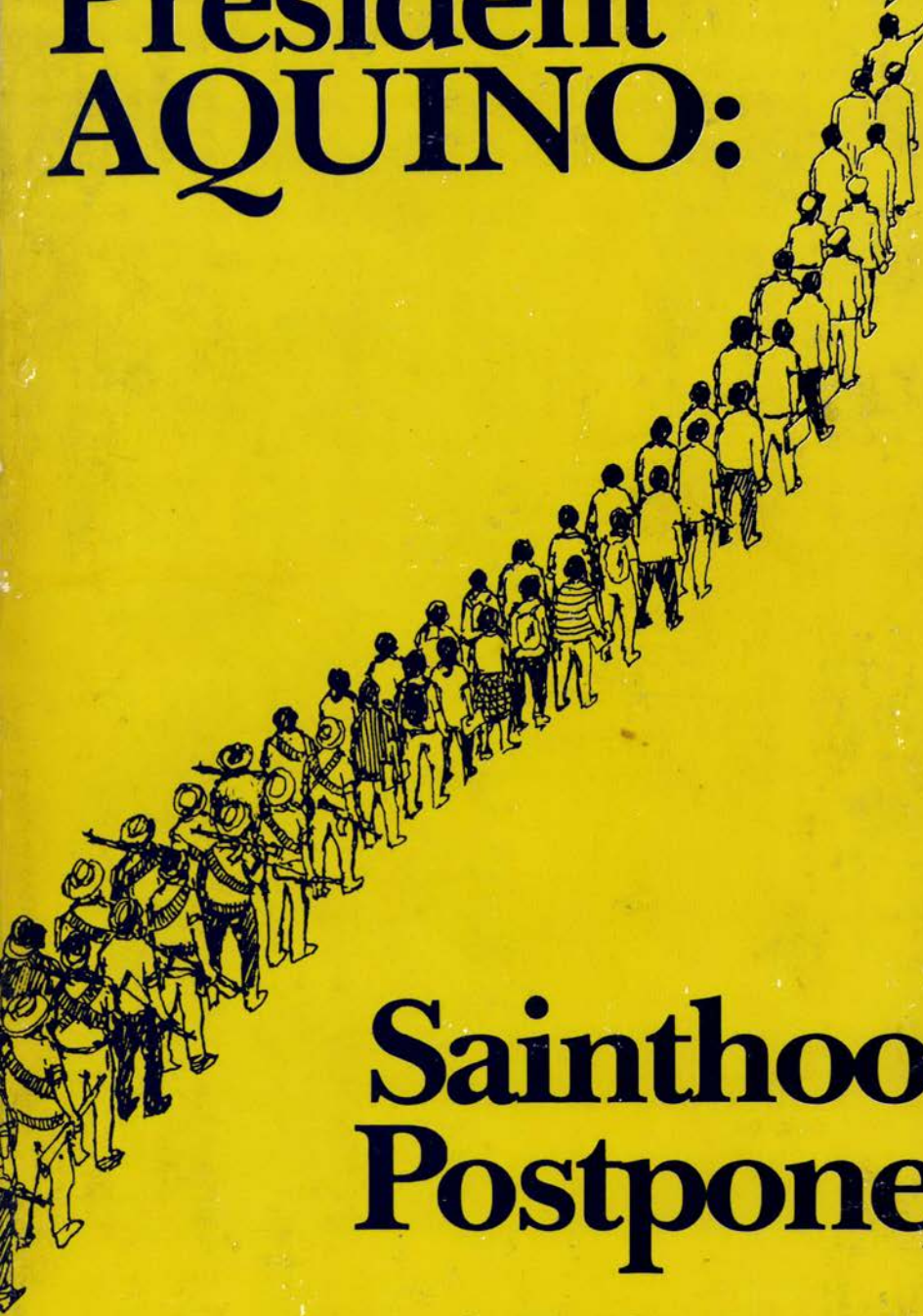


President AQUINO:



Sainthood Postponed

Lewis E. Gleeck, Jr.



THE GREAT ILLUSION: PEACE WITH THE NPA

From left: Bobbie Malay-Ocampo, Satur Ocampo, Sonny Alvarez, Maris Diokno, Tito Guingona, Dong Puno, Gen. Joemag Magno, Tony Zumel, Gen. Eduardo Ermita, Jimmy Guerrero. (*Mr. and Ms.*)



BY THE AUTHOR

- Americans on the Philippine Frontiers* (Carmelo & Bauermann, Manila, 1974)
- American Business and Philippine Economic Development* (Carmelo & Bauermann, Manila, 1975)
- American Institutions in the Philippines 1896-1941* (Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1976)
- Over 75 Years of Philippine-American History: The Army and Navy Club of Manila* (Carmelo & Bauermann, Manila, 1976)
- The Manila Americans, 1901-1964* (Carmelo & Bauermann, Manila, 1977)
- Nueva Ecija in American Times: Homesteaders, Hacenderos and Politicos* (Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1981)
- Laguna in American Times: Coconuts and Revolucionarios* (Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1981)
- Pangasinan in American Times (1899-1946): Diversified Agriculture, Rebellion and Collaboration* (Bulletin of the American Historical Collection, 1983, Nos. 42-45)
- The American Half Century (1898-1946)* (Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1984)
- The American Governors-General and High Commissioners in the Philippines: Proconsuls, Nation-Builders and Politicians*, (New Day, Quezon City, Philippines, 1986)
- Dissolving the Colonial Bond: American Ambassadors to the Philippines, (1946-1984)*, (New Day, Quezon City, Philippines, scheduled 1987)
- The Rise & Fall of Harry Stonehill in the Philippines* (Loyal Printing, Inc. 1989)
- The Third Philippine Republic (1946-1972)* (New Day, Quezon City, Philippines, 1993)



A brilliant **Independent** cartoon captures Mrs. Aquino's frantic efforts to escape a failing economy (and polity) on the wings of the world's best-publicized dove.

SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

LEWIS E. GLEECK, JR.

*"Is not this amazing ascendancy of one Family,
sufficient on which to erect a Tyranny? Is it not
enough to excite Jealousies among the People?"*

John Adams, 1765

PREFACE (1988)

Even though I truly mean no disrespect, it is risky to criticize a saint. Let it therefore be understood at the outset that I believe President Corazon Aquino to be a woman of piety, intelligence, courage and dignity, and a President whose demeanor, if not policies, has earned the Philippines deserved prestige in the world. I wish her well despite serious misgivings.

I was never an admirer of Senator Aquino, whom I knew from 1963 to 1972. Though I conceded that he was brilliant, I found him a demagogue, a Filipino politician in the traditional mode, and one dangerously cooperative with the Communists. Cory Aquino and many of Ninoy's close friends believe him to have undergone a spiritual transformation in prison, being converted to Jeffersonian democracy and Gandhian non-violence. Their ideas demand respect, but as the following pages will attest, I do not share them. At the deepest core of Ninoy's being, I believe, was an unquenchable passion to be crowned the Number One Filipino, a goal which evaded him in life. By his martyrdom, however, he succeeded in setting in train the events which destroyed his antagonist, President Marcos. I therefore honor Ninoy as a brave man, and I acknowledge the greatness he acquired by his immolation.

* * * * *

I have sought to add spice to my tale by the indiscreet revelation of selections from a series of voluntary memoranda, here called the "Cassandra Commentaries" that for two years I addressed to Ambassador Stephen Bosworth. Their publication can embarrass no one but myself. I must however point out that although I classified these notes at the time, they included no classified material received from any agency of the U. S. government. Since my retirement from the State Department in 1969, I have not been privy to messages either to or from Washington, and I have no reason to believe that the Ambassador shared any of the opinions expressed in those memoranda or in the present work, of whose contents he is unaware.

In my *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture* (1987), to which the present book is a sequel, I made too little reference to the Opposition press; this shortcoming is here partly made good by extensive references to the weekly *Mr. & Ms.*, probably the best example of the *genre*, despite the wildly eccentric English of some of its reporters.

In preparing my Marcos manuscript, I found little help in the books written by others. In contrast, the present manuscript has benefited appreciably from two that offer important information and insights. The first is *Aquino vs. Marcos: The Grand Collision*, by Manuel F. Martinez, a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, which includes much excellent material and many brilliant interpretations despite serious editorial deficiencies affecting both language and content. *Cory*, by Isabelo T. Crisostomo, an academician and journalist, is well-edited, judicious, and generally fair to all concerned. Nick

Joaquin's *The Aquinos of Tarlac* is a frustrating mixture of fact and fancy composed by a poet who writes beguiling and sometimes treacherous prose. Still, all three, as well as Joaquin's *Doy Laurel: A Political Odyssey*, are invaluable sources for those who wish to understand Ninoy and Cory Aquino.

Waltzing with a Dictator, by Raymond Bonner, one of the Leftist hit men in the American media, is concerned chiefly with documenting his thesis that Marcos made fools of successive American administrations. The book's final chapter describes in detail the massive U. S. intervention on behalf of Cory Aquino in the 1986 "snap" election. Readers who are familiar with the Philippines, as Bonner is not, can find many useful suggests of information on the Washington scene in the book, plus occasional quotations of the views of others, who do not share Bonner's ignorance, on earlier events.

Unavailable during the author's preparation of early drafts of the manuscript, one book deserves honorable mention—*Worth Dying For*, by Lewis Simons. It contains much superior reportage based on interviews with excellent informants (his account of the Enrile-RAM planned coup is brilliant, though unjustifiably anti-Enrile), along with some factual errors and occasionally shallow interpretations that witness to a lack of intimate familiarity with the Philippines and Filipinos. Advertising blurbs citing the author's Pulitzer Prize and the puffery that he has "covered Asia" since 1967 fail to conceal his amateur standing as a Filipinist. Still, despite its lack of depth and perspective, Simon's book, for the greater part, constitutes outstandingly accurate and insightful reportage. Lucy Komisar's *Corazon Aquino: The Story of a Revolution* also includes some good reportage, padded into an unofficial biography. Its author is almost illiterate when it comes to the Philippines, and much of the "biography" consists of superwoman propaganda retailed by Palace flacks Teddy Boy Locsin and Teddy Man Benigno. Still, it yields occasional nuggets (which I have put to good use) and includes one good chapter on the *coup* that aborted, *God Save the Queen*. A major work, *Impossible Dream* (published in 1989) written by Sandra Burton of *Time*, was brilliant and reliable reportage but skewed by the author's idolatry of Ninoy Aquino.

On Communism, the authoritative work is still Whittaker Chambers' *Witness*, a world classic of literature as well as politics, and probably the most important book written in my lifetime. It is a tragedy that so few of those who presume to judge or report on Communists and anti-Communists have studied it, since it is incomparably the best ever written on the subject. It can however be usefully supplemented by Andrew Boyle's *The Fourth Man*, the story of the British traitors, Michael Straight's *After Long Silence*, the confessions of an American anti-anti-Communist, and *No Sense of Evil*, by James Barros, the story of Herbert Norman, the Canadian spy who committed suicide.

I am once again deeply indebted to my associate, Mrs. Arcadia Sabalones, librarian at the American Historical Collection, where I am curator and editor of its quarterly *Bulletin*, to my wife Norma, who has helped with research and publication requirements, to Mrs. Cora Gallardo, who has once again conscientiously prepared the picture sections and skillfully handled liaison problems with my printer, and to Tina Dugay-Oliva, my durable and indispensable typist.

The author and his readers are obliged to Bal Magallona for the eloquent cover drawing, a veritable essay in graphics.

PREFACE (1992)

On re-reading my manuscript, I realize I have written what some readers may feel is too critically of President Aquino. I make no apology for my judgements. I welcomed her proclamation as president in February 1986, as I welcomed the Marcoses' departure, miraculously without bloodshed, from the Philippines. I regretted several of Mrs. Aquino's first acts (liberation of Communists from jail, the "liberation" of Marcos family assets by cronies and relatives, etc.), but I kept an open mind until November 1986, when she fired her Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, who had convinced a reluctant General Fidel Ramos to join him in a military mutiny. This made it possible for street demonstrators to sweep Mrs. Aquino into power. Cory's defenders claimed that Ponce Enrile was contemplating a *coup*. If he was, it was a reflex action. From her first days in power, Cory had been scheming to get rid of *him*.

I am also no believer in the myth of Ninoy Aquino as a champion of Democracy. I knew him too well. I deplored his assassination not only because it was evil and despicable, but still more because it converted him into a hero, rather than the martyred *macho* he actually was.

Finally, I am firmly convinced that a government cannot perform adequately if its basic *raison d'être* is revenge. I am not so Christian as to believe that such sentiment is never justified, but revenge, as a basis of government, covers up flaws in both the policies and performance of government. Hatred can so deform thinking that anything that the dethroned Monster has done must be seen to be Evil, and its opposite, Good. This was the rationale of Palace policies for the entire six-plus years of the Aquino government.

In sum, I regard the presidential term of Corazon Aquino, Ninoy's widow, as not only a failure, but in the end, a regression comparable to the worst days of the Marcos regime (August 13, 1983 to February 26, 1986). As a consequence, my one book has become two separated, but overall, bearing the judgement: *Corazon Aquino's Failed Presidency*.

To American Readers:

Cory Aquino, choreographed in 1986 as a saint by the world media and championed by the American government, flashed like a meteor through the heavens for two years, but failing to capture the coveted Nobel Prize, quickly sputtered to earth. During the next four years, she was sustained in office largely through the efforts of the United States, which fell victim to its own delusion that it was supporting a saint who would lead the authoritarian-oppressed nations of the world to an American-style democracy. This was a triumph of ideological commitment, a vision without the slightest historical basis, as Carlos P. Romulo, the world's best-known Filipino, had earlier pointed out. Asia preferred strong, if necessary authoritarian, leaders.

Mrs. Aquino was also not only inexperienced but untalented, a victim of a

grossly-oversimplified view of democracy, which in her mind seemed to consist of anything that ran counter to the acts of the Marcos government, some of whose parctices and policies were sound and effective. Since Marcos had been a strong leader, Cory abdicated leadership in favor of playing, first, chairman of a mediocre Board which could never agree, and then reached *Kafeklatsch* decisions among her own cronies, whose husbands occupied official positions which they consistently mismanaged. Mrs. Aquino tolerated total incompetence or corruption in her ministries and though repeatedly promising to correct anomalies, just as repeatedly reneged, blindly clinging to cronies and relatives.

In the process, the President double-crossed all those who had brought her to power: Laurel, who brought her a party machine without which she could not have run; Enrile, without whom there would have been no mutiny (Ramos had to be convinced); Roces, the man who had managed a campaign for signatures urging her to run; Ongpin, the man who had made her regime acceptable to the international bankers; Executive Secretary Orbos, who created the only favorable Palace *rapport* with the public; her party's leader (Mitra) who had managed to see passed most of her legislative proposals; and the Cardinal, who wanted Fernan, a Catholic of good reputation to succeed her, while she insisted on the colorless, indecisive Ramos. Such a listing is by no means complete; it overlooks the man who organized her dead husband's politically effective parade, and many others. In the end, Mrs. Aquino was stripped as naked as Lady Godiva, betraying her most faithful supporter the United States, which had believed that she would offer some leadership in mobilizing public support for a policy which most of her people wanted (the bases).

None of these betrayals could be attributed to principle; they were all motivated by pique, pride or prejudice, which she robed in pious sanctimony. Never has one nation judged another's leader so inaccurately: they believed they had found a saint, but in the end found her just another sinner.

*To the memory of Jaime Ongpin,
whose tragic death was the severest judgment yet
rendered on the Aquino government.*

Book I

SAINTHOOD POSTPONED (1986 - 1988)

Book II

FROM SAINT TO SINNER (1989 - 1992)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sainthood Postponed (1986 - 1988)

I	The <i>Cacique</i> Forebears	1
II	Ninoy As Journalist; Cory as Student	4
III	The Politician and the Politician's Wife	13
IV	Senator Aquino's Arrest, Trial and Imprisonment	24
V	The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade	39
VI	The Assassination and Cory's Transformation	62
VII	A Government of Human Rights Lawyers	79
VIII	Cory and the NPA/NDF vs. Ponce Enrile and the NAFP	104
IX	The Second Aquino Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections	119
X	Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan <i>Putsch</i>	141
XI	Ongpin's Death and the January 1988 Local Elections	163
	Intermezzo 1989: A Mid-term Assessment	179

From Saint to Sinner (1989 - 1992)

XII	A Discredited Government	191
XIII	One Disaster After Another	225
XIV	A Weakening President Yields Ground	248
XV	Mt. Pinatubo, Ormoc, Government Performance, and Other Disasters	277
XVI	The Final Humiliations of the Saint Turned Sinner	307
XVII	Election Day and the Long Count	337
	L'Envoi	357
	Index	361

Book I

SAINTHOOD POSTPONED (1986 - 1988)

Chapter I

THE *CACIQUE* FOREBEARS

Cory Cojuangco and Ninoy Aquino were born in (January) 1933 and (November) 1932, both into families of *caciques*—provincial lords or bosses, whose influence was based on land ownership, with tenants who served in war as their soldiers and in peace as armed guards or voters backing their candidates. Philippine national politics has been based on coalitions of these provincial bosses, leavened by sons who had gone to Manila for their education and remained there as politicians, as did Juan Sumulong, Cory's maternal grandfather. The Spaniards had resisted the demands of the *caciques* and the Filipino priests to share power, and after a small but militant group of Manila workers revolted, several of the *caciques* in 1896 joined the rebellion against Spain. When in 1898 the United States went to war with Spain over Cuba, it sent its Navy and later, its Army, to fight the Spanish in the Philippines, forcing Spain to surrender both its army and its Philippine territory. Then, when the victorious Americans refused to recognize the Filipinos' claim to independence, the Philippine-American war broke out. Resistance to American arms was often led by the *cacique* families, but the Filipinos were soon defeated. When they sued for peace, their *cacique* leaders were usually recognized by the Americans as the leaders of a cooperating regime. So, to landholding and wealth as a basis for *cacique* leadership was added, in many cases, the prestige of resistance against first Spanish and then American sovereignty.

The Aquino family had a Tarlac Revolutionary General as forebear; the Cojuangcos were great landowners in Tarlac. Both Cory and Ninoy were reared in the atmosphere and ease of provincial/Manila luxury, tempered periodically by lean years on the part of the Aquinos whenever they lost an election and had to mortgage their properties. For Cory and Ninoy, theirs were generally lives of luxurious, intense family socializing—engagements, marriages, births (often a dozen or more¹), baptisms, birthdays, confirmations, church holidays and funerals, with the extended families and their retinues (a *yaya* for each child) periodically assembled around groaning tables of food, enlivened by dances, musicales, cockfights, card games or *mahjong*, at which it was not unusual for small fortunes to change hands. Cory has pictures which record some of these events featuring Ninoy:

There is one of a grim-looking seven-year-old Ninoy at the traditional New Year's Eve party of the pillars of Tarlac society; his mother Aurora is in the picture, too, as are his future parents-in-law, Jose and Demetria Cojuangco. There is another shot of Ninoy, this time as a shy ring bearer, standing ramrod straight with the rest of the bridal party at the altar.²

¹ Ninoy was one of eleven (four half-brothers), Cory's siblings were unusually few, there were only six.

² Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, in *Panorama* (11/25/84).

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

In rural society, the local priest was usually an honored family surrogate (often he contributed to the blood line); tenants and servants were usually well-treated, and their birth rates were only marginally inferior to those of the *cacique* families. There was no primogeniture; younger sons migrated to Manila generally to become lawyers or doctors and then politicians, occasionally businessmen. Among the *cacique* families, intermarriage was the rule, and as Cory told Nick Joaquin, she and Ninoy “must have met” at these constant family socials, but her first remembered glimpse dates from when they were nine years old. The meeting of the nine year-olds was not a happy one; Ninoy had boasted that he was a year ahead of Cory in school. This was already 1941, and the years of the war, with Japan occupying the Philippines, were lean years, with unprecedentedly little socializing. While Cory went to convent schools, Ninoy was a frequent visitor to Malacañang, invited by his friend Doy Laurel, whose father had been made President by the Japanese.

In the Philippines of those days, men were the politicians, the masters outside the home; inside, the wives (sometimes a maiden aunt) ruled, holding the purse strings and most of the time running the family *hacienda* or family business. Formal education was limited for women, but a few had already entered the professions, and with the encouragement of the American regime, the government. The Americans were gearing up, in 1932, for the inauguration of the Commonwealth three years later, when Filipinos would take over all but the departments of defense and foreign affairs, as they had already taken over nearly all the posts in the bureaucracy except for one Cabinet position (Education), and Filipino-American relations were characterized by great cordiality.

Ninoy’s childhood preoccupations are well summarized by Manuel Martinez:

Ninoy the kid was characterized by three things: precociousness, love of animals and undistinguished performance in school, where he gained no medals or honors. Of the first, Doña Aurora said that when Don Benigno’s many political visitors arrived in their home in New Manila, and if he was in the bath, he would tell the four-year-old Ninoy to attend to the callers. The young kid charmed the guests with his conversational ability, just as four decades later, guests to the Ninoy house in Times Street were astonished by his kid daughter Kris. “And when we had parties,” said Doña Aurora, “where would you find Ninoy? Out among the parked cars surrounded by drivers and talking with them.”³

In 1945, when the war ended, Cory was thirteen, and her parents sent her to the United States for the conventional convent education of the women of the Filipino wealthy class. In all, she spent seven years in that pious environment, which set its mark indelibly on her brow. (“Give on a child for the first seven years” say the priests, and to those tender years in the Philippines were thus

³ Manuel F. Martinez, *Aquino vs. Marcos: The Grand Collision* (Quezon City, 1986), p. 165.

The Cacique Forebears

added all the years of early womanhood⁴). Though she told a *Panorama* interviewer that she had wanted to return to Manila for college because “I was missing out on a lot of things,” her parents “wouldn’t hear of it.” (Why not?) As the daughter of a very wealthy man, she had “unlimited use” of a charge account, though she insisted somewhat defensively to her interviewer that the family’s children “never abused the privilege” and that her family was not *all* that wealthy:

“We were always comfortable but we were always taught to appreciate what we had and that it had taken my parents and their parents so much to be able to give this to us. And we were expected to really do our best in our studies so that later on, no matter what befell the family fortune, we would be able to do it our own.”⁵

While Cory was in school in the United States, Ninoy had suffered a severe blow. His father was accused, and for a time condemned, as a collaborator with the Japanese—a charge for which there was both substance and a defense. It was a shock for Ninoy to discover that he, who had since childhood been sure of a warm and respectful reception wherever he appeared, was briefly reduced to pariah status:

He was close to [his father] Don Benigno. He shined his shoes, carried his things when he moved around, stayed with him when he attempted to make a political comeback, and lost. He was only 15 when his father died of stroke. Because Don Benigno was accused of collaborating with the Japanese during the war—nobody was accused of collaborating with the Americans—Ninoy and the Laurels, Rectos, Osmeñas, etc., were for a time social outcasts. “That was a turning point,” he said “I was twelve going on thirteen and I had learned about the insecurity of life. Up now, down tomorrow. That was when I began to distinguish between night and day, sorrow and laughter. I got the idea that if I laughed for one hour I would cry for one hour. So I restrained myself from laughing too much.”⁶

⁴ Lucy Komisar, in her biography of President Aquino, quotes one of her classmates at convent school as saying that “she was always talking about ‘Our Lady’ and her faith in religion.” Ian Buruma, reviewing Komisar’s book in the *New York Review of Books* (6/11/87).

⁵ Kalaw-Tirol, *op. cit.*

⁶ Nick Joaquin, *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, Manila (1983) p. 193.

Chapter II

NINYO AS JOURNALIST; CORY AS STUDENT

During the early Fifties, Ninoy was fitfully studying law and newspapering, making good use of his bachelor's status by acting as Prince Consort for successive Misses Philippines. (Pacita Roces, wife of his employer Chino Roces at the *Manila Times*, managed these public spectacles.) There were those who even reported that he dated Imelda Marcos.⁷ Ninoy showed little aptitude for, or interest in his studies, preferring to score points on his teachers and scorning their instruction. He was, as Martinez insightfully reminds us, "glandularly" active rather than studious:

He was not the philosophical, brooding, egghead type. Ninoy was too physically and glandularly active—his "energy crisis" was too much energy rather than too little, and he went prancing about instead of doing his homework. He jumped from AB philosophy to AB history—an indication that he finally felt his mind was more empirical than inductive. His restlessness buffeted him through four schools—De La Salle, Ateneo, San Beda, the University of the Philippines. He was studying law when he applied for a reporter's job in the *Manila Times*, and in a short while he had morning classes and afternoon-evening work, literally dorming in the *Times* offices. At 17, he left his law studies, certainly to his exquisite delight, for a stint in the Korean War as a correspondent. He had always [so] lagged behind in his studies that after he had left, professors were rebuking slow-learners with the ultimate jibe: "Why don't you go to Korea?"⁸

The Korean War Correspondent

Most Filipinos know little of Ninoy in Korea apart from what he told Joaquin, who reworked Ninoy's observations (made twenty years later) into an anti-American tract.⁹ Cory has spoken of letters from Korea; there were letters to Ninoy's mother and perhaps also to his publisher Roces, but none are publicly available. The actual dispatches Ninoy sent from the front give little substance to, and in many instances conflict with, his later tape-recorded jeremiad to Joaquin. According to the Ninoy of 1972, his first discovery, as rendered by

⁷ One was Raymond Bonner, in *Waltzing with a Dictator* (New York, 1987), p. 101.

⁸ Martinez, *Op. cit.*, p. 167. A San Beda high school classmate's recollections of Ninoy documents his verbosity and *chutzpah* several years earlier than Martinez' college references. The San Beda classmate said that Ninoy seldom knew the answers to the teachers' questions but insisted on holding the floor.

⁹ *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-218. The author tells us this book was completed in 1972.

Ninoy as Journalist; Cory as Student

Joaquin, was "It didn't take Ninoy long to learn that this was actually another American War." Still, a few sentences later Joaquin relates that on arrival Ninoy was given hospitality by a Filipino diplomat, Dr. Bernabe Africa, one of a U. N. rehabilitation team which included the distinguished Thai statesman Pote Sarasin and a Turkish representative, one Dr. Idilo. Actually, if one goes back to the text of Ninoy's cables from Korea, neither Joaquin's reportage nor Aquino's memory of those years can be relied on. Ninoy's first cabled report, for example, includes the words "The men [Koreans] are fighting for their own freedom and their children's freedom and independence for the preservation of their country's democratic institutions."¹⁰ On October fifth, he wrote, as summarized by the headline, "Three Month Red Rule Worse than 30 Years of Japanese Occupation." His story included the statement:

The kindly treatment which had [at first] . . . puzzled the conquered South Koreans thinned out as the days passed until the veneer wore off and the persecution began.

The Reds later became harsh, overbearing. They looted houses, recruited men for their forced labor camps, sent men to the front and shot those who ventured out to roam in the streets.

It was all very cruel, the people said bitterly.¹¹

When the South Korean forces sliced 80 miles across the 38th parallel, and were followed four days later by U. N. forces (U. S. First Cavalry Division), Ninoy exulted that the Filipinos had at last been given their own area of responsibility, and was full of praise for the Americans:

For the first time since our arrival in Korea, the Xth was given an area of responsibility. It is now guarding the vital supply line to all Korean cities and at the same time clearing North Korean guerrillas in "not-cleared" areas believed to be numbering some 3,000 Red stragglers.

We don't know how to thank the American officers attached to us, for they have been very helpful and interested in the needs of the boys and have been more solicitous of their welfare than ever expected. The American officers come here every day to inquire as to our needs and have been equally prompt and regular in fulfilling them.¹²

Five days later, Ninoy complained of Korean ingratitude; quoting a Filipino soldier: "I hate to fight and sacrifice for people who are indifferent and do not show us the slightest gratitude." On the 22nd, he reported that the weather was "biting cold."

Joaquin also tells us that Ninoy was a "baby Asian" among the rest of the "white" correspondents (though most of the Americans were darker than Ninoy!), that he inspired humor because he drank milk, and that he made

¹⁰ Manila Times, (9/10/50).

¹¹ Manila Times, (10/5/50).

¹² Manila Times, (10/15/50).

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

friends with Marguerite Higgins of the *Herald Tribune*, who used to ask him to drive for her. According to Ninoy, Maggie taught him the basics of war correspondence: to get names, *names*, and hometowns. (If Dave Boguslav and Chino Roces of the *Manila Times* had not already taught him that, they were either negligent or Ninoy was a slow learner.) To Joaquin, Ninoy characterized this world-renowned, prize-winning journalist as a “sob sister” because she wrote tear-jerking human interest stories about American G.I.s.

Drawing both on Ninoy’s reports and letters to his mother, Joaquin at first lets Ninoy tell his story straight—quoting excerpts from his own sob stories from the Filipino battalion, whose personnel suffered from the cold (heavy duty winterwear didn’t arrive; Filipinos encountered frozen engines for the first time), and were assigned to disappointing mop-up operations rather than fighting at the front. Col. Azurin’s objections to breaking up the battalion (always a problem when allies, one powerful, the other weak, fight on the same battle line) eventually led to his replacement, and then came the sudden shock of the massive Chinese counterattack. At this point, Joaquin shifts from narrative to calumny. Relying exclusively on one book by a soured American general,¹³ Joaquin and Ninoy sing a duet of scorn and contempt for the United States. As a springboard, using a panicky reaction to the American rout at the Yalu river which appeared in *Time*, Joaquin scornfully compares *Time*’s prediction of “the loss of Asia to Communism” with the survival of [some of!] Asia in 1980, and then grows hysterical himself remembering President Truman’s threat to use the atomic bomb against the Chinese. When some of the UN objected to Truman’s sabre-rattling (the writer vividly remembers the horror expressed by one member of the British foreign service, in which the unholy trio Burgess, McLean and Philby were so strategically placed), Joaquin taunts the U. S. for its inability to conceal its failure to dominate its UN allies:

The speed with which the United Nations dissociated themselves from that statement revealed who had been using whom, to disguise private interests as a crusade for justice and world peace. “For the first time,” says Fehrenbach, “the U. N. cloak that the United States Government had so expeditiously woven for its action in Korea became not a support but a hindrance.”

Joaquin takes such pleasure in the humiliation of United States arms that for a few pages he almost loses Ninoy in order delightedly to quote an unnamed Australian newspaper’s praise of the Chinese. (Did it come from the pen of Australian Communist Wilfred Burchett, who in his memoirs at last admitted that he was in the pay of the Red Chinese?)¹⁴ When Joaquin gets back to Ninoy, the Filipino war correspondent has just gone through the harrowing experience of a first mortar attack, which reduced him (as it has others) to jelly. To recover,

¹³ T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*.

¹⁴ According to Professor Robert Manne of Latrobe University (Australia) in *Quadrant*, who examined Burchett’s correspondence. *National Review* (October 4, 1985).

Ninoy as Journalist; Cory as Student

Ninoy requested Christmas leave from publisher Roces and got it. Two weeks of playing the hero back home, however, brought on unmerited feelings of shame at having left the battalion in the lurch, so he overcame his fears and went back. To return was the right, the courageous thing to do, but it is a typical Ninoy exaggeration and a transparent effort to assert maturity when he claims he had aged ten years (28 years old rather than 18) by the time he returned to Korea. . . Back in Korea, Ninoy succumbed to another of his typical whirlwind enthusiasms. He “discovered” Korea. What do you know? —it had a history, a culture, and Ninoy became an instant scholar, planning to write a book on the country.

Comparing Ninoy’s cables of 1950-51 with Joaquin’s reportage of 1983, we can only conclude that the latter telescopes thirty years of growing disillusionment and cynicism concerning U. S. policy in the Far East. The significant thing in Aquino’s Korean experience, however, in Joaquin’s judgment was not so much that Ninoy had become a scholar, but that he had begun his liberation from the “hogwash” of anti-Communism:

I now had a healthier respect for the enemy. Oh, I was still caught up in the hogwash of the slogans: the Great Mission to Save the World from Communism. To me, Communism and democracy had been black and white: Communism was bad, democracy was good. But when I saw how the North Korean prisoners were tortured and yet stuck to their own creed, I began to wonder.

What really convinced Ninoy that the Communists had something that others did not were his conversations with a young North Korean whom he interviewed at length, even sleeping in his cell:

He had been a soldier barely a year when captured. He was not sorry; he had done his duty; and no argument could convince him that he had fought for the wrong cause. “They are going to kill you,” said Ninoy. And the boy had shrugged: “Well, everybody has to die sometime.” Ninoy was awed by the firm spirit of this boy who was his own age but had been “indoctrinated” so much more effectively. “There must be something that ticks here,” thought Ninoy.¹⁵

The author has examined Ninoy’s Manila *Times* despatches written from Korea in 1950, and has found none of the sentiments quoted by Nick Joaquin as Aquino’s in 1980. Ninoy writes chiefly of the suffering of the Filipino soldiers from the cold and of their struggle to stay alive, clinging to their weapons against the assaults of the north Koreans, the Chinese and the elements, and he documents the international complexion of the U. N. resistance: “To the British Commonwealth troops, the Turks, the French, the Dutch, the Australians, the Canadians, the Greeks, the Swedes and the Thailanders, it was the same. To our very own Xth BCT troopers, it too was no different.”^{15a}

¹⁵ Joaquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-246.

^{15a} Manila *Times* (12/20/50). Juan Villasanta of the *Evening News*, who on two assignments in Korea spent several times as long as Aquino covering PEFTOK, wrote an entire book

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

In desperate fighting around Gloster Hill, the Filipinos were bloodied, and Ninoy lost a good friend, Captain Yap, who had unnecessarily exposed himself in order to recover a Filipino body. Captain Yap had a daughter, and Ninoy brought her back a doll because her dead father had promised her one. . .

In 1952, Ninoy made a whirlwind newspaperman's visit to Southeast Asia, where he interviewed many of the principal political figures. When he returned in 1952, Bonner, who did not know Ninoy, believes, on the basis of interviews, with others, that his views "were anything but fixed" and "perhaps inflated by his youth and ambition"¹⁶ This seems highly likely.

Ninoy and Huk Supremo Taruc's Surrender

However, it was Ninoy's success in seeking out, as President Magsaysay's intermediary, the Huk *supremo* Luis Taruc, which would make him a national figure (and Taruc's permanent friend). As Joaquin relates the story, this exploit began as an attention-getting gimmick proposed by Ninoy to President Magsaysay himself. To re-invigorate public enthusiasm for Magsaysay, which had cooled because of Senator Recto's continued attacks on the President for being an "American Boy," Ninoy urged: "we have to do something dramatic, maybe on the Huk front. After the big build-up of the campaign there cannot be a let-down; we have to sustain the momentum. He asked me what I had in mind and I told him I had this wild idea of trying to contact Taruc. He thought it a good idea." Actually, Taruc had been sought out by enterprising journalists ever since 1949, when James Halsema, then of the UP, had obtained the first interview, but in Joaquin's exposition, Ninoy's meeting with Taruc was a tremendous feat of derring-do in a threatening environment of field and forest, intrigue and danger. Through a chain of five contacts, two of them related to Taruc, Ninoy was put in touch with the *Supremo*, who insisted that Manuel Manahan, Magsaysay's chief of the Presidential Complaints and Action Committee (PCAC), accompany Aquino;

Manahan was one of those who had earlier interviewed Taruc, but Ninoy sought to do him one better: "Manahan had scored a scoop as newsman when he interviewed Taruc in 1950; Ninoy was at first aiming at nothing bigger than another scoop on Taruc." Joaquin, who admires Huks almost as much as he does Chinese communists, breathlessly describes, in hero-worshipping prose, the Huk party sent to conduct Aquino and Manahan to Taruc's lair:

Suddenly, out of nowhere, appeared young men in olive drab armed with Brownings and Garands; for a moment Ninoy thought that his derring-do had

(*Dateline: Korea*), on his experiences there. He shared neither Ninoy's 1972 opinion that anti-Communism was "hogwash" nor his belief that the Communists were reasonable people to deal with.

¹⁶ Bonner, *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

Ninoy as Journalist; Cory as Student

been spoiled by the army—but the youths in fatigue turned out to be the advance guard of the supremo. They had been there all the time, lurking behind tree and bush, watching from a distance the visitors sprawled on the white sand as they guarded the approaches to the site. Silently, to no audible command, they deployed along the banks. The full moon had risen and in its light Ninoy saw how tough and healthy these young Huks were. A while later came a second team of the advance guard, to herald the arrival of the supremo.

Taruc was an hour late to the appointment; he had a two-hour walk from his headquarters deep in the forest. Eight husky young bodyguards formed his escort and they carried Brownings, Thompsons, automatic carbines and Garands; but Taruc himself was in no way grim-looking. He had a gentle voice and greeted the folk from Manila with old-fashioned courtesy, offering his hand to the son of the man once deemed mortal enemy by the Huks.

Manahan released his story: Taruc had only gone into rebellion because of his demand for just treatment of the tenants. He was not opposed to Magsaysay, but had not endorsed him for President because Magsaysay was “dangerously inclined to the American imperialists.” . . . When President Magsaysay heard of Ninoy’s meeting with Taruc, the President’s first reaction was to order a military operation, but he was persuaded by Ninoy to explore the possibility of negotiations. Joaquin wrote that the proposal was made at a propitious moment, since the *Supremo* was about to be liquidated by the Lava brothers, then heading the Huks. At their second meeting—again following an arduous trek into the mountains and jungles beyond Clark Field—Ninoy, hearing that Taruc believed in God and was a nationalist, was converted:

I thought to myself: “How can they call him an agent of Moscow when he is such a nationalist?” Then he explained to me what had led him to take the hills. I don’t know if it was because he was so convincing and charismatic, or because I was so young and impressionable—but I was an instant convert. So, instead of negotiating with him in behalf of Magsaysay, I would go back and negotiate with Magsaysay in Taruc’s behalf.

Ed Lansdale of the U. S. Embassy was of course a spoilsport:

. . . the military refused to buy the story. “Aw, you were talking to a wily guy and you’re so young.” And the U. S. embassy guy came in, Ed Lansdale, to give us his own analysis: “These guys are commies and we’ve got them on the run. Talk to Taruc now and he’ll do again what he did with Quirino—come down, collect his backpay, then take off again.” In other words, the only good Huk is a dead Huk.

Ninoy added, in words that would be repeated by his widow in 1986 (and perhaps heard with a shudder by Quezon’s widow, in Heaven since her and her party’s massacre by Huks in 1949): “. . . I argued that we should negotiate with them because they were Filipinos, in the wrong maybe, and maybe only misguided. That was going to be my line.” Negotiations were then on and off for weeks. Several wild goose chases left Ninoy frustrated, but he persevered. Still, when a message finally arrived setting a date for the *Supremo*’s actual surrender, President Magsaysay wanted to junk the plan in favor of military action:

You know, Ninoy, the army thinks that in 72 hours it can get Taruc. So

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

let's forget about this for the time being. I told him the army had been trying to catch Taruc for six years, and without success; so why not go through with this project. But Magsaysay said to postpone it. I had a long and bitter exchange of words with him and finally I said: "All right, if that's how you feel about it, forget it!"

With the support of Manahan and publisher Chino Roces of the *Manila Times*, Ninoy nonetheless stubbornly clung to the hope he could bring Taruc in peacefully. He went back to Magsaysay and obtained his reluctant consent to another attempt, though the President charged Ninoy with being naive, "blinded by this guy Taruc," who had "converted" him. A three-hour "troop freeze" was set up, and Ninoy and Roces went to the rendezvous. Successfully bringing Taruc in, Ninoy ran into Huk fighter Col. Valeriano, who didn't share Ninoy's views about reformed Huks. He told Ninoy that

the orders had been changed: Taruc was to be taken to Camp Murphy. "Is the President there?" asked Ninoy. Valeriano said he didn't know, but had orders to see to it that Taruc was turned over to General Vargas. Ninoy was shocked.

To placate the army, which had lost the chance to nab Taruc, Magsaysay would break the agreement made with Taruc, by making it appear that the supremo was surrendering to the army. That moment when Taruc was wrested from his hands was one of the blackest in Ninoy's life. "It was the beginning of my differences with the army."¹⁷

* * * * *

Cory first became aware of Ninoy as an individual, she told Joaquin, during her 1954 vacation in Manila, after he had returned from Korea as a bemedalled war correspondent. She was struck, as were nearly all who met him then or later, by his eloquence. To her, he was "articulate". To those less admiring, he was at best fluent or voluble, at worst glib or even a windbag. Certainly he overwhelmed most listeners with a flood of words.¹⁸ In any case, Cory was captivated: "I was impressed because he had been to the war in Korea. Definitely, I had to concede that he was much more intelligent and the most articulate guy I had met. If he was not mature in years, in outlook he was." Not only Cory, but most people, were fascinated by Ninoy's torrent of talk, though few of them could later remember just what he had said. It is a pity that Joaquin did not record some of the substance of the couple's conversations, but as noted above, he (much later) quoted Ninoy as saying that his Korean experience had liberated him from the "hogwash" of the slogan "to save the world from Communism." Joaquin reminds

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 250.

¹⁸ One exhibition, mentioned by Joaquin (p. 299), occurred at the author's (my) house. It was a bravura performance.

Ninoy as Journalist; Cory as Student

us that in Korea, Ninoy found passionate believers in Communism, who would resist even torture to affirm their beliefs,—therefore, Ninoy (and Cory?), by a perverse logic, concluded that Communism was no danger!

For the rest of Cory's school year, Ninoy was obliged to be articulate by mail, but he continued to impress Cory; his love letters were "not mushy." In the end, his courtship by correspondence was effective, but she put off his marriage proposals pending further personal contact: "We had not really been together all that much, to see if we really liked each other." Back in Manila, she registered as a law student at F. E. U., "as a discipline," and the two began to keep regular company at movies and dances, both chaperoned, as the families evaluated the match: "Her parents approved of Ninoy, but thought she should finish her law first. Moreover, his mother had been ill that year and the Cojuangcos didn't know if she was well enough for a wedding."

An opportune automobile accident put an end to what Joaquin refers to "this pussyfooting". Ninoy's white Buick was struck from behind by a jeep so violently that both Cory and her chaperoning sister were thrown to the road, suffering painful contusions but fortunately no serious injuries. Due the next evening in Baguio for a family party, Cory gamely left her hospital bed to make the trip so that Ninoy would not be blamed for her failure to appear. Facing her parents, Ninoy was for a moment squelched, but soon recovered:

For once in his life he was really quiet. My parents had said: "Don't you ever ride in his car again!" Ninoy said to me. "You fell from my car on purpose, to force me to marry you." My goodness! But he now insisted on setting the date. So finally I told my parents and they said: "Let's not have a long engagement." Their own wedding anniversary was October 11 and we decided on that date, though it was only ten days away. So, everything was one big rush.¹⁹

Apparently the CIA financed the couple's four months honeymoon in the United States. Joaquin's version is: "During their four months in the States, Ninoy observed training methods in American spy schools and did a report on them for Magsaysay." During most of his career, Ninoy, by his own account, was close to the CIA, though Joaquin reports him, *post facto*, as a severe critic of that organization. According to Aquino, at President Garcia's request, he participated in the unsuccessful CIA plot to overthrow Sukarno ("The Colonel's Revolt") and was personally taunted by President Sukarno later for his role in the failed conspiracy. In this caper, Ninoy, still according to Joaquin, was brilliant, reckless and lucky; the CIA was clumsy, ignorant and incompetent. Whether it was at this point Ninoy allegedly applied for CIA employment is

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 252. Rereading this passage after talking with others who knew Ninoy as a politician reminds the author that Marcos and Ninoy, given their different social origins, made remarkably similar decisions in selecting a mate. Having played the field, they decided what they most needed politically (Marcos a vital political connection and Ninoy money) and then successfully demanded immediate capitulation on the part of their intended brides. In Ninoy's case, he followed a pattern already established by his father and grandfather.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

unknown. Its station chief answered an official inquiry by Defense Minister Enrile in 1969 by saying that Aquino "had applied for employment and had been refused." Ninoy clearly had a lasting interest in but less talent for espionage; he was a compulsive talker, inveterate politician and improviser, not a conspirator.

As he embarked on his political career, Ninoy might have chosen either Pampanga or Tarlac as his principal political base (he spoke Pampango as well as Tagalog), but his ties with Tarlac were stronger, and he would have known, as President Macapagal did not, that the Pampangos were an unacceptably small political base. In Tarlac, he could count on its numerous Pampangos, but the province also opened a door to the clannish Ilocanos in the north, since a substantial Ilocano population was to be found within its borders. Ninoy therefore acquired a Tarlac *hacienda*, certainly with financial backing from his in-laws, who like other *hacenderos*, were happy to invest in not only a son-in-law but someone who promised to be a successful politician. When he took leave of his employer "Chino" Roces of the *Manila Times*, Chino said he would keep his seat warm, but Ninoy's eyes were fixed on a political career. Roces, however, would prove faithful to his protege even beyond the grave by collecting, in 1985, the million-plus signatures which Cory demanded before she would turn presidential candidate.

Chapter III

THE POLITICIAN AND THE POLITICIAN'S WIFE

Life with Ninoy

Cory has related the story of her married life in detail to several reporters. There is utterly no doubt that theirs was the wholly traditional marriage made by a Filipino politician: An ambitious young political aspirant marries landed money, the couple at once begin a large family, and the spheres of responsibility of the spouses are rigidly defined: he will be the politician and rarely present father; she will be responsible, as the Germans say, for *Kinder, Küche and Kirche*. Nonoy laid down the terms; Cory willingly accepted the traditional division of labor. Her description of the arrangement, as made to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, was specific:

Ninoy . . . was "a first-class male chauvinist," his widow says with undisguised amusement. "To my face he would never admit that I influenced him, especially when there was a group around. He would not concede to me. Never. I think the fact that he was a Pampango had something to do with that. I learned soon enough that I wasn't supposed to come out the victor in front of other people." If there were no major conflicts on this matter it was because, says Cory, they both outlined to each other early enough what their areas of authority and responsibility would be. She made it clear that as far as politics went "he was the master and I the novice" but "in other things *pabayaan mo na ako*." (leave them to me). He never, for instance, attended any of his children's school meetings or activities, staunchly maintaining that those were a woman's domain.²⁰

Ninoy's view on family size and children were equally *macho*. He told an interviewer from a women's magazine that he was opposed to family planning:

Procreation is the greatest gift of God ever gave to man, therefore man shouldn't tamper with it. I'm orthodox and conservative when it comes to the subject of the family. I believe in the old family traditions, that the wife should stay at home and that we should happily accept all the children God sends us. For me, the more the merrier. I myself come from a big family—we were seven children.

On that one occasion, Cory differed publicly. She defended family planning for those financially unable to afford additional children:

Cory Aquino does not exactly agree with her husband on this matter. She believes in family planning and says that the morality of taking the pill depends upon one's conscience. If there is an adequate reason, such as the family suffering a financial setback or the wife being gravely ill and the rhythm method doesn't work for the wife involved, Cory Aquino sees nothing wrong if the wife concerned finally resorts to the pill.

²⁰ *Panorama*, op. cit.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Ninoy, characteristically ready to expand on any topic proposed by an interviewer, emphasized his belief that population control was unnecessary. Scientific research and God would provide:

The Malthusian theory that human reproduction will outstrip food production is all bunk. Scientific research will come up with new resources. These Malthusian theorists are exaggerating things, they've become nervous and worried too soon. I believe that God will provide for all the children He sends into this world.²¹

Once her husband's political career was launched, Cory tried gamely to adjust to the trials in the life of a politician's wife: constant absences of the husband, a lack of privacy, forced geniality:

For New York-bred Cory, the transplantation from big city to small town, where electricity was available only from six in the evening till six in the morning, was a grand culture shock.

"For the first time in my life," she recalls, "I understood what lack of privacy meant. People would come into our bedroom. They wanted to be part of the family, a part of our life. In the beginning this was a little difficult for me to accept. *Naku*. I told myself, what did I get into? Then I recalled nobody forced me [to marry him]. It was my own decision.

"There was never a day when we didn't have people coming to the house. And because Concepcion was such a small town; everybody knew everything you did, including *kung ano ang utos kong pamalengke*. (what I ordered in the market) And of course everybody wanted to teach me *kung ano ang gusto ni Ninoy*." (just what Ninoy wanted)²²

Even so, that was only the beginning of her political acculturation. Nick Joaquin describes Ninoy's first campaign for Mayor of Concepcion, Tarlac:

His mother joined the campaign, and so did his wife Cory, though she had just had their first baby. For Ninoy and Cory, both reared in ease, that first campaign was more than a crash course in politics, it actualized their return to Tarlac; and if learning the boondocks was hard, as a test it was tougher. They would rib each other afterwards on their greenhorn culture shocks.

Cory would hang up His and Hers towels in the bathrooms and be dismayed when people, who started streaming in at six in the morning, dirtied up those towels. "My God, we have no privacy!" she wailed to Ninoy. She had to learn to cook on a clay stove and women neighbors would come in and kibitz on her cooking. When she picked up the baby they would tell her how to put on the diapers. She went with Ninoy to the farm and when she asked where the little girl's room he offered her a tin can. She accompanied Ninoy on the stump and burst into tears when he had her lugged over a mudhole. "What made me mad," laughs Cory, "was his unchivalrousness. I expected him to pick me up and carry me across, not ask one of his men to do it!"²³

²¹ *Woman and Home*, April 6, 1969

²² *Panorama*, op. cit.

²³ Joaquin, *The Aquinos of Tarlac* (Manila, 1983), p. 258.

Politician and Politician's Wife

Governor of Tarlac

Ninoy won, as representatives of the political Right and the Huks split the votes at both ends of the political spectrum. The next rung in the Philippine political ladder was Provincial Governor, for which he ran and won in 1962. As Governor, Ninoy's passion for accomplishment often took direct rather than legal forms. Martinez relates how he manhandled a rape suspect, ambushed cattle rustlers, and intimidated a gang of toughies, each time exultantly announcing (1) the end of rape, (2) the elimination of cattle rustling and (3) the disappearance of teacher intimidation in his province. Martinez concludes:

In these cases, however, he was cocksure, more than morally outraged, intensely judgmental at the cost of lawful process. He was always self-confident before his conversion.

He was not pompously arrogant; otherwise, people would be repelled by him, which they were not. He only had that oversized confidence and dash which led Eva Kalaw to tell him that he would never make a good President until he met defeat or some kind of appalling comeuppance.²⁴

The more lasting and fateful aspect of Ninoy's governorship, however, was his *modus vivendi* with the Tarlac Communists, which convinced the AFP that Ninoy was a willing accomplice, if not a deep sympathizer ("Huk coddler") of the Communist Party. After his governorship, Nick Joaquin defended Ninoy's shallow arguments in a long *Philippines Free Press* interview (11/9/69), where the major theme was that "[p]art of his [Ninoy's] job, . . . whether as mayor, vice-governor or governor, was to stay alive, be able to stay in the province."

Then the interviewer lets Ninoy speak for himself:

"What would have happened if, when I became governor, I had said: 'Go crush the Huks; they are bad, they are killers, eliminate them'? The next day, some barrio captain would have come to me saying: 'Governor please come to our barrio and crown our fiesta queen.' And the Huks would have set the time and place for my ambushing. There are 400 barrios in Tarlac. Any one of them could be my execution ground."

Joaquin endorses Ninoy's claims that collaboration with the Huks was thus a necessity: ". . . how could he govern if he could not move around? As a civilian official, he had to use not guns, but intelligence. He had to find out what the Huks had in mind."

Ninoy was explicit about the deal he offered the Huks in Concepcion:

"So, when I was mayor of my town, I purposely sought them out. I said to them: 'Look, fellows, what is it you want?' They would say: 'We want this land reform.' And I'd say: 'All right, tell me how you want it and let me implement. 'Why kill?' That was the beginning of the dialogue.' "

Joaquin swallows this simplistic argument uncritically, and yet another not only simplistic but fallacious: "He learned one important fact: the Huks just don't kill anybody," they are "Robin Hoods[!]"

²⁴ Martinez, *Op. cit.*, p. 189.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

“The army says the Huks kill off the population. That is most erroneous information again. The Huks are after government informers, government agents, and cattle rustlers. In fact, in the barrios, the Huks are like Robin Hoods.”

The fact that the Huks usually find it politically rewarding first to liquidate oppressive officials or crooks is a tribute to their political sagacity, not their morality. The killing fields are a later stage in their program.

Ninoy had no objection to the Huks playing Robin Hood as long as it did not embarrass him:

A peasant aggrieved by a landlord complains to the Huks and instantly the landlord becomes more reasonable. A farmer tells the Huks about his stolen carabaos and instantly the carabaos are located and the rustlers punished. An ailing man without money for medicine is reported to the Huks and instantly a doctor in town is ready to treat the patient for free.

“This quick action is the real weapon of the Huks,” says Ninoy, “and that was where I tried to outpunch them. Every local government agency had to be efficient, to outgun the Huks.”

There is some truth and more falsehood, some sincerity and a great deal of evasion, in Ninoy’s shockingly simplistic argument. It was true that to go after the Tarlac Huks was to court death, but Magsaysay went after the Huks nationally and survived. There was further outrageous evasion in his claim: “I had to be governor of all the people in my province: Huk and non-Huk, criminal or what have you. ‘Peace!’ I said to them. ‘I don’t care if you are commie or non-commie, but I do not want killing.’” . . . “Do your killing some place else” was hardly the answer of a statesman or a Presidential aspirant whose campaign Joaquin was plugging.²⁵

One final aspect of Joaquin’s glorification of Ninoy as Governor of Tarlac was the soap opera he purveyed describing Aquino’s supposedly agonizing decision to turn Liberal when he found that a *Nacionalista* governor could get nothing for his province under a Liberal Party (Macapagal) administration. When President Macapagal came to Tarlac to talk to the Governor, he used the same line that President Roxas had used with Marcos in 1948:

I am a Pampango, you are a Pampango. Maybe you’ll be the next Pampango President. Who knows? Give me a chance to help you. Tarlac has been good to me all these years and I want to help Tarlac. Ninoy knew it was true about Tarlac having been very good to Cong Dadong: “He was a favorite son in Tarlac; he always got more votes there than in Pampanga. But about my seeing my way clear to joining his crusade, I could not, even though Garcia had become very understanding. I still had my doubts even when 38 of my colleagues had gone over and I was the last of the NP governors.”²⁶

²⁵ Ninoy’s closest Huk contact was Commander Dante Buscayno, the son of one of his *Hacienda Luisita* tenants, whom Cory Aquino today trusts and befriends.

²⁶ *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, p. 292-293.

Politician and Politician's Wife

This is a gross example of what the Filipinos call "OA," or overacting. Filipino governors changed parties at the drop of a hat. Still, Joaquin milks the phony drama to a fare-thee-well:

"I told Macapagal: 'Mr. President, I don't want to run again. I'll go back to school, review my law, take the bar.' He said: 'Oh Ninoy, forget about the bar, you're not going to practice law.' I insisted I wanted to go back to school, maybe take some special courses in political science, and write. I would write about my years with Magsaysay and my time with Garcia. Macapagal said: 'No you run for governor, serve your people well, and leave everything to me. Now, go talk to your mayors.' "

When his mayors heard of the five million being offered to Tarlac, the seige was over. In July 1963, Ninoy took his oath as a Liberal and, as was the compact, all his mayors followed him on the road to Damascus.²⁷

USAID and Governor Aquino

One important and neglected feature of Aquino's governorship after he switched to the Liberal Party was the assistance he received from the U. S. government's Agency for Economic Development. Favorably impressed by the young Governor's dynamism and commitment to progressive management techniques, USAID was able to see modified existing Philippine government prohibitions on assistance extended to sub-national jurisdictions. It was thus able to select Aquino as one of two provincial governors (the other was Governor San Luis of Laguna) to receive additional assistance at the provincial level. Ernest Neal, USAID's assistant Director in the Philippines in 1966, had been bowled over by his first meeting with Ninoy:

... One afternoon, the young, dynamic and ambitious governor of Tarlac burst into my office beaming with enthusiasm. He had seen a Food for Peace movie on self-help work in Korea. He wanted to know how he could get AID assistance for similar projects in Tarlac. I reviewed our working paper with him and told him we would like to help but could not because all assistance to the provinces had to be processed through the National Economic Council (NEC). He wanted to know how to work directly with AID. I told him that [under current regulations] we could not work directly with a province, but if the government of the Philippines authorized the Mission, we could work with two provinces. He wanted to know who could authorize this. I informed him that the Chairman of NEC could do it.

Larry Henares, NEC Chairman, Neal and Aquino miraculously reached an agreement on arrangements the same day, and Neal congratulated himself and his agency on getting both Aquino and Governor San Luis of Laguna on board: "... Through chance, two of the most progressive governors in the Philippines had been selected for the pilot project. Their provinces met all the criteria spelled out in the [USAID] working paper. No amount of planning and setting

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

up criteria for selection could have produced any better leaders for AID's initial effort for working with local governments."²⁸

However, it was characteristic of Ninoy as a Filipino politician, when dealing with the United States government, to be grateful not for favors received, but only for those subsequently desired. When Ambassador Blair asked that squatters be removed from land leased to the U. S. communications facility in Tarlac, Ninoy demanded that Blair find money to compensate the squatters. After all, he explained to Blair, in a typical Aquino *non sequitur*, the CIA had scads of money to finance its projects, shouldn't it pay the Tarlac squatters to move?:

"God almighty," I cried, "the CIA spends money like water—and no accounting. Don't tell me you can't produce thirty thousand dollars to pay off these people." I made another proposal: let the Americans give me surplus equipment; I'd sell it, turn the money over to them, and they could pay off the farmers. "Oh, no, we can't do that. Against regulations." So I fired off this nasty letter to Blair: "With friends like you we don't need enemies. Here you are talking about defending democracy in Vietnam when you're killing off farmers in Tarlac."²⁹

In passing, we may note this evidence that Ninoy's demagoguery was not confined to the hustings or the Senate.

... But let us return to Eva Kalaw's observation that Aquino would not really mature before being forced to deal with some appalling comeuppance, — a judgment which deserves further exegesis. As a presidential candidate, two things were unique about Ninoy, apart from his volubility: a personal familiarity with Malacañang which none of his predecessors had experienced, and the historically unprecedented youthful age at which he passed through the successive stages on the route to his own Presidency. Thus he had not only frequented Malacañang as a boy, but later spent much time there as a high-placed technical assistant under three Presidents. Furthermore, each of his successive posts had been secured at an age which others achieved only later in life: Ninoy had been the youngest war correspondent, and the youngest mayor, Governor and Senator, barely qualifying legally for these positions. This unbroken and unprecedented series of successes was bound to make Ninoy no less than his admirers feel that he was predestined to be President. Nevertheless, one important thing was missing from his meteoric career: sustained performance in any of his successive positions. Ninoy felt he could not afford to dally: he impatiently crowded destiny forward in order to obtain ever-greater responsibilities, and his comeuppance came to late to qualify him for the Presidency—if in time to anoint Cory as his successor.

²⁸ *Hope for the Wretched*, Ernest E. Neal (AID, 1972), p. 84.

²⁹ *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, *Op. cit.*, p. 307. This episode is an impressive example of how fervent Filipino nationalists take it for granted the U. S. government should assume the responsibility for any problem that arises in pursuit of common objectives. Some, including the author, would call this evidence of "colonial mentality."

Politician and Politician's Wife

Between 1958 and 1962, Ninoy managed his father-in-law's huge *Hacienda Luisita* in Tarlac. One of Ninoy's greatest assets was that his passion for accomplishment was accompanied by insistence on the best available technology. When strengthened by his commitment to progressive management and plenty of money both to hire the best brains and equip them lavishly, this meant that Ninoy soon had the *hacienda* setting new production records. The center of furious activity, Ninoy stormed through the plantation like a whirling dervish. Various visitors then and later (including the author), have testified to the cyclone of activity which Ninoy had set in motion and in which he participated fully, even after becoming Governor in 1962 and Senator in 1967. During this entire period, Ninoy never held fewer than two important full-time jobs, one in the Palace (technical assistant under Magsaysay, Garcia and Macapagal), along with his successive political offices—Mayor, Governor and Senator, which left Cory to concentrate on serving coffee to visiting politicians and on caring for her five pregnancies and the children as they appeared. As far as the father was concerned, he was rarely visible inside the house. Where he acquired the book knowledge Cory later credited him with is impossible not only to document, but to believe. (Martinez: 5000 books read in prison, including the Bible word-for word, and all the volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britanica!*) Ninoy was a talker, never a reader. Even in Boston, he was neck-deep in speeches and heading a resistance movement. Ninoy's talent was lightening quick absorption of political language and ideology, along with a remarkable memory and capacity to reproduce current clichés, slogans and phrases, particularly in the form of rebuttals. He was a born debater.

Senatorial Bomba

Ninoy's career as Malacañang technical assistant and Senator has been described in the author's *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*. Here it is necessary only to repeat that his performance in the Senate was that of a demagogue, providing a steady diet of *bomba* (exposés and denunciations) for the entertainment of the press and public and, at times, adding to the discomfiture of the man in Malacañang whom he hoped to succeed. The following excerpts from debates in the Senate are vintage Aquino both in their satire and their poor English. Defending the students' violent 1970 break-in at the Palace, Senator Aquino began with crude sarcasm and ended by inviting further student violence:

The students destroyed P250,000 worth of property Friday night, but these [Marcos] leaders have pillaged and ravaged the Republic down to its last dollar!

Yes, the students broke some Malacañang gates. But is this the reason to break student legs and student arms? And what about the leaders who forced open the gates of the Philippine National Bank and the Central Bank for their private looting?

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Yes, the students smashed windows and even tried to burn the Malacañang clinic. For this they have been branded: student arsonists! For this they were fired at the back.

Indeed, terrifyingly shocking. But was the nation shocked when its leaders burned down municipal buildings to conceal the evidence of their election frauds?

. . . the student "vandals" destroy[ed] P250,000 worth of property. But this same nation was not revulsed by public officials who have rigged the stock market, taken multi-million peso kickbacks and conspired among themselves against the country in Election '69.

The student vandals are condemned because by their crudity, they got themselves picked up by the TV eye in their honest outburst while their leaders who wheeled and dealt in some high-walled mansion in Forbes Park are spared the nation's wrath.

This, Mr. President, is the extent of the callousness of our society—a society that would put property rights over and beyond human life and human rights!

Yes, this is shocking. I, too, was shocked—but not by student vandalism. I was shocked, Mr. President, by the way all the armed forces were brought in to crush students demonstrations, by the way a new David bravely stood up with his slingshot against a Goliath riding in his chariot, an armored personnel carrier, and armed with M-14's and M-16's, "M" standing for "Manslaughter."

Do I stand, Mr. President, to justify violence? To foment unrest?

I stand with the students, Mr. President—not with Malacañang's tools of violence, not with Mr. Marcos' blood-thirsty troops. They are the fomentors of violence, the harbingers of unrest.³⁰

Another sample of Senatorial *bomba* shows Aquino in a typically smart alec exchange with Senator Teves, who strove manfully but unsuccessfully to raise the level of a debate on taxation:

Senator AQUINO. It is most unfortunate, Your Honor, that you have not joined much in our hearings on the Corregidor Affair.

Senator TEVES. Because I did not believe we could accomplish much with it. I rather attend the hearings of the Committee on Finance and other committees where there are pending bills.

Senator AQUINO. Well, I am actually grateful for this revelation: that Your Honor cares more for taxes and appropriations than for human lives.

Senator TEVES. No, no, no, gentleman from Tarlac. I said, I am concerned about finding the truth and getting at the bottom of this incident, but first things first.

Senator AQUINO. You mean tax before lives?

Senator TEVES. No, no, no. It is a matter of timing. As I said, this incident has passed; what is done is done; we cannot revive the dead if they are really dead.

Senator AQUINO. Because they are dead, let us forget them for a while and attend first to Mr. Marcos' tax measures?

³⁰ Martinez, p. 86-87.

Politician and Politician's Wife

Senator TEVES. No, no. I do not wish to engage in such kind of discussion.
Senator AQUINO. It is because the dead can no longer be taxed?³¹

Down to the proclamation of martial law, Senator Aquino was, indeed, the compleat, traditional Filipino politician. He seemed clearly marked by fate for the highest office—as a bruising, brawling, big-mouth Filipino politician totally cast in the traditional mode—not the Gandhi-like apostle of *satyagraha* or a Christ-like figure of self-sacrifice into which media hype in the first case, and the climactic, tragic figure on the tarmac he became in the second, subsequently converted him. At this stage (1971-72), as he stood in the wings as the most likely opponent of President Marcos in 1973, he seemed to incarnate all the elements of traditional Philippine political power. Martinez again puts it convincingly:

He grew up in the big city and in his early teens stayed for months with the Laurel kids in Malacañang, a place he was to often stay as youthful aid to Presidents Magsaysay, Garcia and Macapagal. He spent part of his childhood in Tarlac, the provincial heartland of Luzon. He was both city boy and a country boy, a not insignificant fact in a nation where the clash between urban and rural was distinct and powerful. To grow up partly in Malacañang—and spend one's twenties at the center of power and exercise part of that power as presidential assistant—this could not but instill that confidence which Ninoy always enjoyed, exquisitely complemented by the awareness that his family was rural-based. If ever there was some invisible school for future Philippine Presidents, Ninoy was the most prominent enrollee.³²

Ninoy's reactions to Plaza Miranda in 1971, incidentally, did not please everyone. One columnist, Aurora Magdalena (who reacted like the author) wrote:

I mistrusted Ninoy Aquino. He looked to me like the stereotype: the taker more than the giver. The classic me-first man. He talked too much, I thought, and mostly of the topics of his choice. Observing him with his family, I felt he had them slightly conned. He whirled in their midst like a planet drawing them around himself and his interests in concentric circles, like satellites. What struck me then was that they knew it, and didn't seem to mind.³³

The Balthazar Interview (1971)

Sometime in early 1971, Aquino traveled to South America and on his return, made several very revealing statements in an interview he gave to an obscure men's magazine (*Balthazar*) in April 1971. Simeon del Rosario, a Marcos partisan and bitter Aquino opponent, has called it a clear manifestation that Aquino was an avowed advocate of violent revolution and one who looked upon

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240-241.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 164-165.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

the U.S.S.R. as a prospective defender of the revolution he favored. Del Rosario, we believe, overestimated the significance of this one interview in establishing his subject's political beliefs, since the record shows that Ninoy was ambivalent about violence: one day he was an avowed advocate of violence, on the next a Gandhian apostle of non-violence and on yet another, some combination of revolutionary techniques. However, the *Balthazar* interview vividly illustrates Aquino in one of his pro-violence phases.

The magazine prefaced the Senator's lengthy statement by a note which explained that Aquino had earlier in the year visited Latin America to attend the wedding of the daughter of Marxist President Allende of Chile, and in order "to lecture in a few universities." Senator Aquino's interview is another of his characteristic monologues: There were two Latin American revolutionary models which the Filipinos "could possibly copy or study in depth:"

The first one is the socialist revolution in Cuba; this was an armed take-over by a band. The second one is the Allende victory; this was through the ballot. Admittedly, Allende won with only about 39 percent of the popular vote [Allende's popular vote was closer to 36% than 39%].

Aquino then lectured professorially but inaccurately not only on the margin, but the significance, of Allende's victory:

This kind of government has never been experimented on in South America. They are usually rightist military governments with very strong socialist themes, like the government of Peron, but never an institutionalized Marxist from where the tools of production will be owned by government. [Aquino omits the Mexican example, among others.]

Aquino found valuable Allende's experience in expropriating American-owned firms:

... he had announced expropriation of major foreign holdings. Now, this is again a new approach because until the '70's, America used to react violently to this kind of take-overs, either by cutting the countries from aid, or by sending [in] the CIA. . . [Again Aquino omits the Mexican example, in which the American oil companies were nationalized.]

Del Rosario particularly stressed Aquino's endorsement of violence in his references to the Constitutional Convention then being held in the Philippines:

Primarily, I'm one of those who believe that change can only come about by violent means. This thing about changing the country's structure by a constitutional convention may be done if we had time, say, if you were working within the context of 50 years or 100 years. . . Gradually, America evolved to what she is now after 200 years of tradition. But even America had had Civil War; even England had her Cromwell. Every country must undergo these growing pains. And tragically, it may be bloody. It may not be that bloody, but we will have to undergo that change. Now, this convention of 320 men will definitely achieve something, but it will be a compromise. It is only when you go violent that there is no compromise: you polarize, one way or the other.

Aquino explained why he felt the NPA was not yet in a position to lead a victorious revolution in the Philippines, but implicitly suggested that *he* was

Politician and Politician's Wife

capable of leading such a revolution at the proper time:

[The NPA] . . . really does not have a hold at the moment, yet. I still believe that revolution can be brought about only by a combination of many factors. Number one—an ideology. You must develop an ideology that is easily comprehensible by the people; whatever that ideology—land for the landless, tools of production should be in the hands of the government, socialist ideology, what-have-you—but it must be easily understandable, easily grasped. You cannot just use hatred—down-with-the-rich. . . You need a plausible, workable and practical ideology. Number two, you need leadership, somebody who can rise above the masses and say, “Now follow me,” and because of his former work, because of his maturity, or because of his bravery and determination, he can rally the people. The third factor is organization. Yes, you can bring it about for one or two days, but in the long drawn-out fight, you lose, so you need organization. But organization needs logistics, funds.

Successful revolution in the Philippines could only occur, however, if the influence of the United States could be neutralized:

. . . in the context of our modern situation, you need the support of one of the super-powers. Whether we like it or not, they are here. But whether it's America or Russia or China, you need at least the nodding acquiescence of one of the super-powers to counter-balance the others. They will interfere, because it is to their interest that they interfere. So, any movement that will not have at least the nodding acquiescence of a super-power will not succeed.³⁴

³⁴ Simeon del Rosario, *Surfacing the Underground*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 2a (Manila, 1977).

Chapter IV

SENATOR AQUINO'S ARREST, TRIAL AND IMPRISONMENT

I have elsewhere (*President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*) made plain my opinion that Nick Joaquin's delirious praise of Aquino as Senator describes a being with whom those who closely followed politics in the years 1962-72 are unacquainted. Joaquin is therefore a tainted source, and may be rejected without apology. Cory Aquino's own idolatrous references to her dead husband, on the other hand, because of their source, can of course not be dealt with polemically, as they arise from an anguish which it would be dishonorable not to share. They must therefore be treated with respect. Even so, when they serve as a basis or excuse for Presidential policies, they must be carefully scrutinized. It is one thing to venerate a martyr and worship a Saint, but the Saint must check her halo when as President, she makes or adopts political policies.

This demystification is the more necessary because Mrs. Aquino has often asserted that her policies are those of her dead husband. First of all, we are obliged to ask, *are* they? Second, and far more important, are they therefore sound? Martyrdom demands reverence, but it does not convert mistaken policies into wise statesmanship. An article by Coryite Lilia Ramos de Leon, "To Know Ninoy is to Understand Cory" in the Leftist Manila *Times* of November 23, 1986, illustrates the problem. Its author is appalled that there are those who think that Cory is too friendly to the Communists; she therefore lectures to fellow bus passengers to correct their misperceptions. Though she correctly notes that Cory's popularity is primarily attributable to her "sincerity and purity," the author asserts further, it is also because she is the "beloved Ninoy's widow." Cory's strength is indeed attributable to her "sincerity and purity," and to her status as the martyr's widow—but "beloved Ninoy"? Here de Leon, like Joaquin, speaks for the Left. Before Ninoy's martyrdom, there were at least as many Filipinos who feared and dreaded the Senator as loved him, and both groups had reasons for their sentiments. Joaquin and de Leon, voices of the Left, are idolatrous in their adoration of the dead politician, but the fact that the Philippine media are today for the greater part captives of the Left, hence often friendly to the Communists and anti-AFP, does not make them the purveyors of truth—any more than the voices heard in Marcos' censored press spoke the truth in the days of martial law.

De Leon accepts Ninoy's *Testament from a Prison Cell* as a reliable source not only for Ninoy's then-professed intentions, but as a charter of what would have actually been his programs if he had been in power. Cory does the same, and in large part demands that the public accept her programs because they are sanctified by his death. Deathbed confessions are, to be sure, treated by Philippine courts as weighing heavily on the side of truth, but whether prison cell conversions to Christian Socialism and the doctrine of non-violence should be given the

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

same probative value is highly doubtful. Moreover, in de Leon's unhistorical and enraptured version, it is hard to recognize the mercurial yet pragmatic demagogue and wheeler-dealer politician that Ninoy indisputably was in real life. Words and language came too easily to Ninoy to take any one segment of them as representing considered thought or a fixed position. His strictures on capitalism in *Testament*, for example, are not matched by references to the failures of socialism, nor its tendency to move from Left to Far Left ("the wind always blows from the left"), shedding the Left's virtues as it accumulates its vices.

De Leon reshuffles phrases to give Ninoy the benefit of the doubt from both church and Party. A recommended *apertura a sinistra* (opening to the Left) is attributed to the Church(!) rather than to the Italian Socialist Party that coined it; she describes Magsaysay's approach to dissidence as "one of reconciliation," when in fact Magsaysay was careful to emphasize that reconciliation should occur only after liquidating armed dissidence; she credits Ninoy with the original inspiration for bravely mixing with his dissident critics, rather than Quezon, who was not only its fervent but most daring exponent; she manages to interpret a series of Papal Encyclicals as a damnation of the policies of the IMF and World Bank, going even the scatological Larry Henares one better; she claims, against recorded Ninoy statements, that the Communists of North Korea taught him to despise, rather than to admire them, etc. etc.

There are indeed attractive features in Christian Socialism, and some of its proponents such as Manglapus and Tatad are admirable men. But the problem is not primarily whether Ninoy was in fact converted to the Christian Socialist vision of society or even of its present local leadership, but whether he would have pursued it when he smelled the strong red meat of political power. The church is an ancient institution in the Philippines, but it has had little effect on political ambitions or results in the Philippines. On the other hand, the apostles of violence have recruited followers who from the beginning have shown a taste for blood, as the 1949 slaughter of the saintly Doña Aurora Quezon, every bit as sincere and pure as Cory, or the NPA killing fields discovered in the rural areas in recent times should remind us.

Moreover, Manglapus and Tatad will have to prove that Filipino electors will flock to a program as virtuous and unselfish as they proclaim theirs to be. Socialism's record, as distinct from its promises, is actually less Christian than capitalism's. Its vision of a classless, humane society remains a vision; capitalism, with all its alleged greed and selfishness, has done more for the workers outside the U.S.S.R. than Communism inside, while Socialism, as marijuana encourages heroin, ~~inductively~~ ("the wind always blows from the Left") veers toward Communism.

Arrest and Imprisonment

According to both Martinez and Crisostomo, Senator Aquino's arrest, on the night of September 21, was effected quietly. Neither made mention of what

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Rosendo Cawigan, Ninoy's security chief, later testified concerning Ninoy's whispered instructions to "evacuate his firearms" from his home. Martinez writes:

From the Senate, Ninoy had gone to the Manila Hilton hotel to attend a committee hearing. He got two phone calls from friends warning him of his impending arrest, but he stayed put. Near midnight, General Romero Gatan walked alone into the room and told Ninoy not to resist. Two hundred soldiers had surrounded the hotel, said Gatan, and bloodshed should be avoided. Ninoy had two aides with him and Gatan, in a deceptive gesture, asked them to go home. At that moment, the young, fighting Senator may have felt the pang of what Solshenitsyn said: All Creation seems utterly betrayed when a man hears the words, "You are under arrest!"³⁵

Crisostomo's version, if less dramatic, is essentially the same:

Ninoy Aquino, regarded as a major presidential candidate, No. 1 critic of President Marcos, and secretary-general of the opposition Liberal Party, was among the first to be arrested by martial law troopers. He was arrested at the Manila Hilton by a team led by then Colonel Romeo Gatan while in the midst of a conference with other party leaders, then placed under maximum security at Fort Bonifacio in Makati, Rizal. No formal charges were made against him at the time of his arrest although the government alleged that the young firebrand had "generally" been involved with subversive activities.³⁶

The seven years and seven months of Senator Aquino's imprisonment have been pictured by his partisans as a baseless, arbitrary, illegal and sadistic punishment visited upon an innocent political rival. This portrayal needs correction: however unjust, it was none of those things. Aquino was no Communist, but he willingly cooperated with the Communists, and was frequently their friend and protagonist. He could have been released like Diokno, after a year or two, but refused to accept amnesty for the sake of what he called principles but can be argued were instead his political ambitions. Though for a short period he was cruelly treated, he was not permanently put in a dank dungeon on a bread and water diet and forgotten; his physical well-being was never threatened until he risked it himself by a hunger strike; his brief solitary confinement was neither as absolute nor as cruel as others claimed, and it was imposed as punishment for an anti-Marcos article smuggled out of prison by Cory and then published in the *Bangkok Post*. Whether Ninoy experienced a spiritual transformation during his confinement must also be disputed, though since most of the rest of us lack divine information, not flatly rejected. Many believe he underwent such a conversion, and this belief, based on verbal rather than behavioral evidence, has strengthened the claim of Cory Aquino's government to moral authority and legitimacy.

³⁵ Martinez, *op. cit.*, p. 292

³⁶ Isabelo T. Crisostomo, *Cory: Profile of a President*, Manila (1986) p. 72

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

Trial by Court Martial

Aquino's trial by a military court was denounced as a travesty and a lynching by his partisans, but a careful reading of the court record does not sustain such a judgment. The trial was probably legal, certainly not illegal under martial law, and it is an intellectual cop-out to assert that anyone charged with grave crimes or misdemeanors by the martial law regime was bound to be innocent. The actual conduct of the trial, also, contrary to assertion, was not a kangaroo court farce, however biased its membership. Over the objections of the prosecutor, the court allowed the defendant to make several long propaganda speeches against President Marcos and the regime, for a brief period admitted to the courtroom a pro-Aquino audience that at times broke into applause for the defendant's statements, permitted coaching of the prisoner by a whole covey of defense lawyers, and even allowed Aquino to argue in public that he was being railroaded. Aquino insisted on acting as his own lawyer, and on boycotting the trial after its first sessions. He of course denied the authority of the military court to try him, a civilian, and the civil libertarians, for whom the entire martial law regime was illegal, endorsed his position.³⁷

On the first day of the trial (March 31, 1975), over the objections of the prosecuting officer, Aquino was permitted to make long speeches addressed ostensibly to the court but actually to the audience and to the public outside the court, of which the following are excerpts. He begins with raw demogogy:

I was accused for the Illegal Possession of ten firearms. I say, the man who should be charged of Illegal Possession of Firearms is Mr. Marcos not me. I charge him with the illegal possession of the entire AFP which he methodically converted into his own private army in which he now brazenly employs to perpetuate himself in power. . .

He follows demagogy with casuistry:

I am charged with subversion because I am supposed to have conspired to overthrow the Government, a republican form of Government and replace it with a totalitarian regime and that I wanted to put his Government under a foreign power because the NPA's were Maoists. Mr. President, I submit, they are charging the wrong man. Mr. Marcos should be charged with subversion because it was he who overthrew the republican form of government, as we know it, and replaced it with a totalitarian regime, under GO No. 1 and subsequent decrees that have been issued. By his own admission, in his own book, Mr. President, Mr. Marcos says he has created and brought about a revolution. He said that, whether it is democratic, centrist or what not he admits he brought about a revolution and he even said that there was a time

³⁷ Here seems an appropriate point to quote Roger Baldwin, father and patron saint of the ACLU, as to the political objective of civil liberties: "Civil liberties, like democracy, are useful only as tools for social change." Robert Stuart Cohen, in a review of *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*, by William A. Donohoe, in *The American Spectator*, February 1986.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

when he almost declared a revolutionary government upon advice of his advisers. It is already his own admission. Who then should be charged of subversion? It was Mr. Marcos who abolished Congress, not the accused.

In addition to insistence that President Marcos, not he, should stand in the dock, he taunted the President with failures and tyranny, and exaggerated the powers that he had exercised to that point:

We are now taxed without representation. The budget, Your Honors, when I was still Senator was only P5 Billion. Today, they say it is P32 Billion. The Filipino people are being bled, but there is no Congress to watch their funds, only one man can issue a decree, giving him if he wants, P500 million and nobody can stop him. Your Honors, Mr. Marcos has consigned to the dustbin of history our cherished doctrines of separation of powers, of checks and balances, the linchpin of our Democracy. He even destroyed the traditional independence of the judiciary because Mr. Marcos may remove, as you all well know, any judge or any court officer by merely, Your Honors, appointing their successor. Even your good selves may be replaced tomorrow.

Aquino said that the charge of murder was logically absurd, and that the witnesses, murderers themselves, had been promised amnesty if they would falsely accuse him:

I am accused of murder, accused of murdering a barrio captain in Tarlac, my own political leader. The records will show in 1963 when I ran for Governor, this Barrio Captain helped me get 95% of the votes in his village. In 1967, this Barrio Captain helped me to be the topnotcher in the senatorial list in his barrio and I got almost 95% of the votes. A few days after making me topnotcher. Your Honors, I allegedly murdered him. Your Honors, the falsity of this charge is evident. I am supposed to have conspired with a dead subversive and the evidence of this conspiracy consists solely of the discredited testimonies of confessed subversives and murderers, two of them my co-accused now who will be the state witnesses against me. . .

I charge Mr. Marcos with the murder of democracy in our country. He suppressed our freedom, our free speech, our free press and free assembly. He has even decreed that "tsismis" or rumor-mongering is now punishable by imprisonment.

Prodded by the court to keep to the issues, Aquino, after saying he was "on his last page," continued his attack by charging Marcos with the responsibility for murders of Muslims:

I hold Mr. Marcos responsible for the carnage in the South. Seven years he neglected the Muslim community. I am being charged for murder. I say the man who inspired the massacre of the Javidahs should first explain that crime to our Muslim brothers. In all candor, I submit therefore, my argument that this court is estopped because you've got the wrong man.

On the second day of the trial (April 1), he was permitted to continue his diatribe:

When I languished in detention, Your Honors, for 11 months, I was never given a chance for preliminary investigation. I was never told of the charges against me. Witnesses were picked up, some were detained, some were interrogated, some were tortured. Yes, Your Honors, some of the witnesses and, as

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

it appears now, were made to sign statements against me without my knowledge. Known subversives, Your Honors, confessed killers, confessed, yes, killers, ranking members of the subversive movement were pampered and made to sign statements against me. And now we have been informed charges against them have been withdrawn. . . .³⁸

Before Aquino was finally gagged by the court, there was much more of the same. Still, none of this meant to assert that the court's decision was not predetermined, — only that Aquino was not totally muzzled. He several times spoke his piece at length and then withdrew from participation on the grounds that he was being framed. There is no way that Aquino partisans could be convinced that he was guilty of *any* of the three charges, though the evidence on all three cases was substantial, and offering accused criminals immunity in return for their testimony against another accused occurs every day in the courts of the United States. Convictions on the basis of such testimony are common.

One more citation from one of Ninoy's several outbursts must suffice to demonstrate the court's leniency toward the defendant's *j'accuse*:

... I was arrested on September 23 while in performance of my duties as Senator of the Republic. For eleven months, Your Honors, I was kept incomunicado under detention, no charge was filed against me. It was only on August 11, 1973 that I was informed of the charges against me and I was made to appear before this Commission created on orders of Mr. Marcos under P. D. 39, dated November 7, 1972. This Commission is an instrumentality of the executive department and not part of the judicial branch of the government. Your findings are not appealable to the judicial courts. Your decisions are merely recommendatory and the final and highest reviewing officer is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, who, according to his own decree and I quote, "may reverse, confirm, increase the penalty imposed, or otherwise modify the decision." In effect, therefore, your Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Marcos, my accuser, is my prosecutor and my judge. . .

Prosecution alleges that my absence will defeat the ends of justice. What are the aims of justice sought to be achieved. Your Honors, by the Prosecution? Trial Counsel will not admit this. But this is a mere propaganda ploy, Your Honors, intended to humiliate and embarrass me. So I will not be identified as a political critic or a rival of Mr. Marcos but a common criminal. Thus the end of justice he really wants to achieve is to strip me of my dignity as a human being.

The prosecutors, for their part, protested that there were present friends of Aquino who had no right to be there:

... we noticed at the initial hearing where Mr. Aquino was present, several lawyers who were never introduced, and who as far as the records of this Commission are concerned are officious meddlers and interlopers, were seen passing notes clearly visible to the Members of this Court. They were passing

³⁸ All quotations from the court martial are from Simeon del Rosario. *Op. cit.*

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

notes to the accused. Some even approached the platform, crouching stealthily from behind the accused, whispering to the accused and ostensibly dictating to him what he should say.

The Charges

There were three charges against Aquino: illegal possession of arms, sedition and murder. There was massive (and to the author convincing) evidence as to his illegal possession of arms, though it rests chiefly on the testimony of two witnesses, Rosendo Cawigan and Jun Locsin, whom Ninoy's partisans consider perjurers. (Cawigan, like most witnesses in murder trials in the Philippines, later died in mysterious circumstances). Reading the trial records, however, it is very difficult not to believe Cawigan, then Ninoy's appointments secretary and head of security, who testified that when picked up by Col. Gatan at the Hilton Hotel, Senator Aquino, *sotto voce*, told Locsin: "Pare, evacuate mo ang mga armas ko sa bahay." (evacuate the firearms from my house) When Cawigan and Locsin arrived at the Aquino home (24 Times Street, Quezon City), the former testified he told Mrs. Aquino (Cory): "Ma'am, ievacuate na namin iyong mga armas ni Senator," (we will take away the Senator's firearms) and she answered "Bahala kayo." (That's your affair). According to Cawigan, the weapons included:

one .50 caliber machinegun; two light machineguns; different short and long firearms, one reloading machine, 1 box full of gunpowder, explosives like two boxes of handgrenades each box containing 50 pieces of handgrenades, 7 canvas jackets, each canvas jacket containing anti-personnel mines and other accessories.

Ammunition, Cawigan testified, was stored secretly: "There was also a secret compartment in the basement of Senator Aquino's house and in this compartment were boxes of ammunition and to open this compartment you have to pull out its cover and the cover was an oil painting." Cawigan further testified that additional weapons, including Israeli UZI's, were given to Aquino by Congressman Roque Ablan in return for promised favors by the Appointments Commission of which Aquino was a member. . . This illegal possession of firearms by Aquino was confirmed by other witnesses.

It must be conceded that in the Philippines, the possession of such armament by politicians, illegal or not, is taken for granted. On the other hand, stored food items, to which Cawigan also testified, were unusual. Interrogated by the prosecutor, Cawigan said that Senator Aquino had claimed he would resist martial law by force of arms, and food would permit him to withstand a siege. "If worst came to worst," Cawigan quoted Aquino as saying, "he would lead an armed group including us, not in Central Luzon where he does not trust people, but in Mindanao, where he has many sympathizers, allies and supporters." (p. 714)

The charges of subversion, were also supported, apart from "Huk coddling" (see Chapter III), by testimony given by Cawigan, some of which relating to the Plaza Miranda massacre, to those who knew the Senator, even then sounded

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

authentic. Subsequently, the accusation made by defector Lt. Victor Corpuz after his re-defection to the AFP, that it was the NPA that ordered the Plaza Miranda bombing in August of 1971, strengthens the conviction that Aquino knew that Plaza Miranda was a dangerous place to be that evening. To appreciate Cawigan's testimony, the reader must remember that the Senator was accustomed to arrive early at political rallies, and that he was a politician with whom the Communists had frequently cooperated—something that could be said of none of the other party leaders on the Plaza Miranda platform. A successfully executed plot would leave only the Communists' preferred candidate to oppose President Marcos, who would be widely believed to have ordered the bombing. In fact, whether or not one believes either Corpuz or Cawigan, Plaza Miranda worked out just as the Communists would have preferred—all the Liberal party leadership was crippled but Aquino, and the electorate put the blame on President Marcos.³⁹

Cawigan was very specific about the instructions he said he received from Senator Aquino during his attendance at the Laurel-Delgado wedding reception the night of August 21, 1971. In accordance with the Senator's orders, Cawigan had been reporting orally every five or ten minutes (Cawigan received *his* information by walkie-talkie from Aquino headquarters) on the arrival at Plaza Miranda of each of the Liberal Party personalities. We cite Cawigan at that point in his testimony when Aquino decided *not* to go from the reception to the meeting, but to his house, and is listening intently to the car radio:

CAWIGAN: And then when we were nearing the residence of Senator Aquino at 25 Times St., Quezon City and about to turn left, or two blocks away, suddenly Senator Aquino shouted: "Pumutok na ang Plaza Miranda, Pumutok na ang Plaza Miranda" (There is shooting at Plaza Miranda) and then after that I noticed that we were already in front of the house of Senator Aquino at 25 Times St., sir.

[Prosecutor] SISON: Now, what happened when you reached his residence?

CAWIGAN: He went down and went straight inside the house and looked at the television coverage, sir. He looked at the replay or videotape of Plaza Miranda.

SISON: You mean to tell us that right upon the arrival of the car you were riding with Senator Aquino at 25 Times St., Senator Aquino proceeded to look at the television set that was showing what was happening at Plaza Miranda?

CAWIGAN: Right sir, even the replay.

SISON: What else happened?

CAWIGAN: Then after viewing the Plaza Miranda bombing he ordered food from Mrs. Aquino, sir, and he ate while viewing the TV set on Plaza Miranda.

³⁹ In the author's *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, he wrote that the version which identified the culprits as associates of then-Mayor Villegas seemed the most likely.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

SISON: But you said you just came from a party, a *despedida de soltera* of the Laurel girl who was about to get married to the Delgado boy. You mean to tell us that Senator Aquino had no appetite while at the Jai Alai party?

CAWIGAN: What I know, sir, is that after viewing the TV of the bombing at Plaza Miranda he still ordered food from Mrs. Aquino and then he ate while viewing the television set.

SISON: And by Mrs. Aquino you refer to his wife, not his mother?

CAWIGAN: To Mrs. Aquino, the wife of Senator Aquino, she is Mrs. Corazon Aquino.

SISON: After that what did Senator Aquino do?

CAWIGAN: And then after eating, he went to his bedroom and when he stepped out I saw Senator Aquino holding the MADSEN, an automatic pistol with 9MM ammo and he ordered us "let's go." The first place that we reached was the FEU Hospital where some of the wounded at the Plaza Miranda were confined.

Senator Aquino subsequently offered more than one explanation for his failure to appear at Plaza Miranda on the fatal evening, including one to the author ("I was warned to stay away"), but Joaquin insists that the *despedida* alone detained him until the TV broadcast from Plaza Miranda ~~went~~ ^{to} dead. Nonetheless, the Cawigan testimony is very persuasive that, to repeat, Aquino knew that Plaza Miranda was a dangerous place for him to be that evening. He did not go, and he did not warn his Liberal Party associates not to go. He can well have thought that the warning was a hoax, but *he alone of the candidates* did not appear that tragic evening. . . Readers are warned, however, that the contention of the author is *not*, repeat not, that the latter martyred leader had any particle of complicity in the holocaust, but only to emphasize his failure to be present. Even in the absence of the Cawigan testimony, which reports language and behavior much of which was so characteristic of Ninoy, his absence undeniably points to prior suspicion, at least, that something bad was likely to happen at the Liberal Party's *miting de avance*.

The charge of murder was less convincing, and the various witnesses appeared to have been coached. It could be discarded entirely were it not that Ninoy himself had on several occasions boasted to visitors (among others Marietta Tree, the close associate of Adlai Stevenson and a power in the Democratic Party of the United States), that he had put a score of troublemakers under the sod at *Hacienda Luisita*. There were many pages of testimony devoted to Aquino's alleged distribution of weapons to his Huk associates, and supplying arms to one's allies among the Huks in Central Luzon was a widespread practice by Filipino politicians (including Marcos).

Inside, with Ninoy

After Aquino's smuggled story to the Bangkok *Post* and his punishment—solitary confinement for over forty days—he and his jailers apparently settled down to a routine prison confinement. When Marcos jailed Aquino, he of

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

course thus denied him access to the world outside his walls. Still, there were occasional penetrations. Already in 1973, for example, he was visited by Marcos critic Donald Fraser, the Minnesota Democrat and his legislative assistant John Salzberg.⁴⁰

Next to nothing on Ninoy appeared in the local press, but as the author wrote in *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, he was not wholly out of sight, as a UPI interview showed in October 1974:

The jailed Senator Aquino . . . was not forgotten either by his supporters or the international press, as demonstrated by an interesting article by Leon Daniel of the UPI which appeared in the *Stars and Stripes* on October 23. It commiserated with the Senator (whom he inaccurately identified as "a sure bet to have won the 1973 elections"), and his wife. It began:

"If President Ferdinand E. Marcos had not imposed martial law two years ago and thrown her husband in prison, Mrs. Benigno Aquino would probably be the first lady of the Philippines today. . .

"Aquino, leader of the opposition Liberal party and a sure bet to have won the election remains in jail on a list of charges including murder which he has called an "unconscionable mockery" of justice.

"His wife, Corazon 41, a strikingly beautiful mother of five children ranging in age from three to 19, said in an interview her husband is innocent and was jailed only because of his opposition to Marcos.

"She said the government wants "to picture him as a common criminal, not as a political prisoner."

"Mrs. Aquino, whose friends call her 'Cory', these days harbors no dreams of ever becoming the hostess of Malacañang, the presidential palace."

The Hunger Strike of 1975

On April 4, 1975, four days after his court martial was re-convened, Senator Aquino went on a hunger strike. His partisan Martinez does not question Aquino's declaration that he intended to fast until death, since it was "his only recourse before patent injustices, with the Supreme Court itself participating in the mockery of the judicial process."⁴¹ Two days later, Aquino withdrew all of the motions he had made before the Supreme Court, probably because the court martial was now hearing what he considered tainted evidence being furnished by Commander Melody and other Tarlac Huks. For some reason, the Senator seemed particularly outraged by this move of the prosecution. He wrote Cory that "No effort was spared to dehumanize and destroy me." Though he wanted to remain in his cell, Aquino was now brought daily to the court, Bernard Wideman of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* writing on April 18:

⁴⁰ Bonner, *Op. cit.*, p. 187

⁴¹ *The Grand Collision*, p. 331

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Benigno Aquino was a very weak man as he took his place in the dock in front of the judges of the Military Commission in Fort Bonifacio. Aquino was flanked by guards and behind him sat two military doctors and a nurse with intravenous injections at the ready. Just outside the hearing hall an ambulance waited. . .

Inside the court, most of the people were directly involved in the trial. In addition, there were Aquino's wife and a few family friends, a few Catholic nuns, the reporters of the local media and a handful of foreign correspondents. . .

[Aquino's] head occasionally nodded. Sometimes he appeared to pay attention to the State's witnesses, sometimes his mind seemed to be elsewhere. Once he read his Bible which he held in his hand. . . At the conclusion of the seventh day of hearings, Aquino was asked how much longer he intended to fast. He replied, "As long as I have life."

Returning to Martinez' description of the fast, Aquino seemed to be ready to give up his life in order to defy President Marcos:

Days passed—ten, fifteen, twenty days. He took no food, but had salt tablets, sodium bicarbonate and amino acids, and two glasses of water a day. He suffered from severe cramps, chills, dizziness, and indescribable loneliness. But as his sufferings mounted, his will increased.

The Philippine media made no mention of the hunger strike. No one in officialdom dared to make any comment. Marcos and Imelda ignored the event. During the trial, when Ninoy was forcibly carried to attend the mock sessions against his will, the government tried to show to the foreign media their concern about his health with the presence of nurses and an ambulance. . .

He was a horrible sight, almost unrecognizable: his weight dropped from 160 pounds on April 5 to 120 on May 5, his blood pressure dropped to 60 over 40. His doctors could hardly feel his pulse beat. His friends started to gather together at five in the afternoon for church services in Greenhills. His family, lawyers and spiritual advisers kept a sustained barrage of advice pressing him to stop, saying that the ends of his hunger strike had been attained and that he was needed in future struggles, he had so much to do alive.

In Martinez' language, the dramatic crisis came on the 40th day of Aquino's fast coinciding with an important church celebration:

On May 13, 1975, on the 40th day of his fast, he made a pact with the Lord: "I want to die today, but if You do not allow me to die, I'll take it You want me to continue my work. Your Will be done." On that day, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, he ended his fast.

Martinez strangely judges that Marcos won this test of strength. In the sense that Aquino finally gave up his fast, and that the public at the time seemed indifferent, this is correct, but in another sense, Ninoy succeeded in establishing himself in the popular mind as not only Marcos' pre-eminent rival, but as the Christ-like figure whose apotheosis would be accomplished on August 21, 1983. Still, Martinez was right that Marcos had won the round:

Ninoy's hunger strike was the lowest point of his life. It was worse than Laur, worse than his first few days in prison, worse than his heart operation

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

problems. It did not produce any appreciable effect on the Filipino people; not a single rally or demonstration occurred on his behalf.⁴²

The Derian Visit

In January 1978, Patt Derian, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights under President Carter, made a trip to the Far East and at her request, was taken on a midnight visit to Aquino by Herbert Natzke, the CIA chief of station in Manila. Ms. Derian of course was even before their meeting favorably biased toward Ninoy. He was one of her more famous clients. Natzke, according to Bonner, did his best to badmouth Aquino on their way to visit Aquino, but without effect. Predictably, Ninoy mesmerized his visitor. Bonner writes:

She, too, had some reservations about Aquino. He was no saint, she knew. But the man she met that night in an open room in an army barracks had changed, she was convinced. For ninety minutes they talked—no, he talked, she listened, about his life and imprisonment. "Some other person had emerged," she thought. "And who emerged was a democrat, a small *d* democrat, with an honest-to-God full understanding of the history of the idea of democracy, of the necessity of it, the mechanism, the games of it. It was simply a breathtaking exposition. . . . We came away with the sense that we had met somebody of monumental stature. Intellectually and in terms of democracy. Like Churchill. A giant."

Ambassador Newsom, who knew Aquino better, found Derian's evaluation unconvincing, concluding that Aquino had charmed yet another admirer. In Bonner's words, "Newsom, upon listening to Derian speak so glowingly about Aquino, thought he had put on a performance for her in the same manner, and with the same success, as the Marcoses did for other Americans."⁴³

. . . By this time, Ninoy was well into his new *persona* of apprentice saint, a "performance", as the Ambassador labeled it, which would later totally convince the Harvard/MIT professoriate. Still, in the national elections held in the Spring of 1978, Ninoy campaigned vigorously for the Opposition on television from inside his prison cell.

Outside, with Cory

It could be argued that for the first year or so of Senator Aquino's imprisonment, Cory suffered more painfully than her husband. For him it was a battle, a test of wills, which kept him occupied and keyed up to the point that on one occasion, he said he even witnessed a vision of the Virgin Mary. Cory had to

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 332-334. Martinez emphasizes his belief that Ninoy was a devotee of the "cult of courage", pp. 164-195.

⁴³ Bonner, p. 227

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

fight both her fears and fantasies, which were boundless. As she told Lorna Kalaw-Tirol:

The first few months of martial rule were "really torture" for her. "I couldn't read. I'd read the simplest thing and nothing would go in. I couldn't understand it. *Siguro* I was just too nervous. I even tried to read Mills and Boon. [Romantic Novels] Nothing. I'd look at my watch and think, *ano ba naman ito?* (what is this?) I would go to mass every day but really and truly maybe my body was here but my mind was elsewhere. I couldn't watch TV because I couldn't bear to see the face of Marcos or Ponce Enrile or anybody.

As months passed, she turned more and more frequently to prayer:

. . . *dasal ako nang dasal* (I prayed and prayed) that Ninoy and the others be released. I thought maybe I wasn't praying the right way, maybe I should pray for Marcos and Enrile and the generals so they will change and they will treat Ninoy better. So we would all say the rosary together. We would say three rosaries a day at one time, and we would pray, please enlighten Marcos, Enrile, Ramos, *ang dami-dami niyan. Sabi nga ng mga bata, "Naku, pag may bago pang heneral dito, lalo nang hahaba ang ating dasal."* (plenty of them. The children said, wow, if there are new Generals, our prayers will last still longer.)

She took to encouraging the children to impose penitential punishments on themselves until a priest successfully objected that such a life was unhealthy for the family:

. . . she also told her children to make sacrifices and to offer these up to their father's release. She forbade them to attend parties; she herself stopped going to the beauty parlor and ordering new clothes. This went on until a priest advised her to allow her children—and herself—to live as normally as possible.

Cory consoled herself that she had "never failed" her husband, however reluctantly she had performed some of the traditional duties of a Filipino politician's wife:

Hadn't she been the conscientious mayor's wife who willingly turned the family car into an ambulance that brought patients down to Manila from Concepcion? Hadn't she completely backed him up in every campaign, dutifully smiling even as complete strangers by the thousands pumped her hands?

Hadn't she tolerated all intrusions into her privacy, all in the name of politics?

In such bittersweet internal dialogues, Cory had the consolation of knowing that it would have been futile to protest. As she told another interviewer (Nini Sta. Romana Cruz): "On many other occasions when Ninoy was into fiery-anti-establishment tirades, Cory would go through the often futile motions of attempting to temper him. But speaking as someone who knew Ninoy too well, she says her stance was one of resignation. 'Who can ever dissuade him from doing something once he had made his mind up?'"⁴⁴ She could only, occasionally, as she said to Tirol, bargain:

⁴⁴ *Mr. & Ms.*, 9/15/83

Senator Aquino's Arrest and Imprisonment

Cory knew only too well that even if she disagreed with Ninoy it was futile to try to change his mind. But she was "always very clear about my likes and dislikes." In 1978, he accepted, despite her initial objection, the opposition's mandate to lead the candidates for the Interim Batasang Pambansa. It was something he really wanted to do, Cory says, and "I said we'll do everything we can, but on one condition: I made him promise he wouldn't run again while he was in detention."

Though the interviewer unquestioningly accepts the assertion that imprisonment permanently purged Ninoy of ambition, she notes that in Ninoy's dream of his own Presidency, Cory's role was to be seen and not heard. Ninoy's descriptions of her function as First Lady were obviously based on a reaction against Imelda's power-sharing with her husband:

At the height of his dreams for his own presidency, though, he had described to Cory the kind of First Lady he wanted her to be: "Ninoy wanted something really different in the background. *Kung puwede sigurong itago (ako)* . . . (If I could just be hidden) What was uppermost in his mind was, *hindi ka makikialam*, (don't interfere) but at the same time, show an example. Since I was not elected in my own right, that did not give me any powers. He wanted that very clear and also for the people not to think I could influence things one way or the other.

The early years of Ninoy's incarceration also saw the disappearance of timid friends. Cory told Sheehy:

Friends turned their backs. People who before would press her hand, purring, "Cory, don't forget us when your husband is president," now crossed the street to avoid her. "I'd just smile when I saw them," she recalls, "but they acted as if, "Look, Cory, please don't remember us."

Though she can laugh about it today, then it filled both her and her husband with bitterness. "In the beginning, our common question was, "Why does it have to be us?" I'd never been mean to anybody. There was so much self-pity in the two of us, . . ."45

That one stretch of 43 days was truly a Gethsemane:

. . . one day military officers dropped off all of Ninoy's personal effects. They refused to tell her if her husband was still alive. For the next 43 days, Cory went from prison camp to prison camp in search of him. Made to sit outside in the sun and rain like a beggar, with no milk for her infant daughter Kris, she learned that her ability to endure surpassed explanation.

Ninoy had been taken north to Camp Laur and locked away in solitary confinement—a torture designed to break a man who loved more than anything to talk. Stripped of clothes and glasses, he paced his cell reliving every experience of childhood until he thought the moment had come when he would lose his mind.

After two years, the Aquino family was permitted to share the life of their imprisoned husband and father, including Christmas season celebrations—a life

⁴⁵ From a later perspective, Cory's abandonment by friends was less severe than what Imelda Marcos suffered. From an army of fair-weather friends, they dwindled to a handful overnight as she became an object of scorn throughout the world.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

which those who wrote about the Aquinos almost without exception failed to mention was one which Ninoy could have left behind (as did Senator Diokno), if he had been willing to accept amnesty. Ninoy's answer—that it would have been impossible to accept amnesty because it implied guilt—is simply not acceptable to knowledgeable Filipinos. His only possible reason for refusing to accept amnesty was that it kept him at the head of the list of post-Marcos Presidential candidates, and Marcos was known to be sick—according to rumor, terminally ill. It was little noticed, then or later, that his most dangerous opponent, if Marcos died, would be Doy Laurel who had not been arrested (though he was said to have been #2 next after Ninoy on the original list of arrestees on September 21) when he returned from the United States several months after martial law.

An embarrassing aspect of Cory's life during her husband's imprisonment were the so-called conjugal visits. Cory says that the pleasure she took on these occasions was always overshadowed by the fear that she might end up on someone's private video tapes. The couple later found the recollection amusing.

Chapter V

THE EXILE YEARS: NINOY'S ERRATIC U.S. CRUSADE

Milestone Interviews

Manila

From May 1980, when he was rushed from prison to the hospital to avoid a possible coronary, until August 21, 1983, in his struggle to retain leadership of the Opposition, both its violent and moderate wings, and to secure the support of the United States for his ambitions, Aquino was on all sides of the issue of how to bring down the Marcos regime. Just before his departure from the Philippines, he uncharacteristically even ate crow, on May 7 appreciatively writing to Dr. A. Aventura of Manila's Philippine Heart Center for Asia that "in the past I've been most critical of the First Lady's projects. Now that I see what she has done here at the heart center—I take back my hard words—hoping I do not choke." (Later, however, on July 20, he told Pamela Hollie of the *New York Times* that Imelda Marcos' visit at the Heart Center was just a calculated gesture: "It was to appear as a great humanitarian gesture. It was to make people believe I had made a deal. . .") Also on May 7, he had written President Marcos to request permission to seek medical treatment in Dallas, adding: "While abroad, I would like to assure you that I shall desist from commenting on our domestic political situation or engage or participate in any partisan political activity, my trip being for medical and humanitarian reasons. . ." (The next month, on June 17, he reversed himself, telling AP's Arnold Zeitlin, who telephoned from San Francisco: "I'm free. I'm beyond his reach. He can't bully me.") On his arrival in Dallas, he had told the AP: "I made a covenant. I promised the President and the Supreme Court. I gave them my word and I won't go back on it. If I did, they would say I was acting in bad faith," and on July 15, he repeated this pledge, telephoning Deputy Defense Minister Barbero long distance: "You have my letter, my word and I have no intention of breaking my word to the President . . . if I have to fight/oppose the government, it should be in the Philippines." Still, in between these two statements, on June 17, Aquino said in another AP interview, "Apparently, Marcos does not realize that events are moving so fast. I'm planning to write him and tell him the facts of life. He can step down now or wait until it blows over. He can become the next Shah."

Dallas

Ninoy's recurrent reversals of policy were probably made in response to the diverse pressures of different exile groups and official Washington. On May 13, in a Reuter interview, Aquino said: "People back home think I'm crazy, but

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

I've given my word, so I'm going back." On the other hand, on June 17, he told the Dallas AP, "If I get the go signal from Marcos, I'm very interested in going to Harvard law school. If I go to Harvard then I'll really have to stay." Not quite a month later, on July 13, according to a combined wire service dispatch from Dallas, Ninoy said: "If Mr. Marcos doesn't grant our demands peacefully, I'm afraid the more radical elements would take over. If that were the case, I wouldn't object to violence. Eight years is too long." A week later, July 20 Ninoy told the New York *Times*, "We accomplish nothing by chaos. What we want is a smooth transition from martial law to a democracy." On July 13, however, after meeting with Raschid Lucman, he had said they would "form a united Christian and Moslem front and fight and topple the Marcos regime." Two days later, he denied that report, informing Barbero in another overseas telephone conversation, "It is true I met with Lucman and told him various things like the Moro National Liberation Front should unite so that they would be heard, but I never said the opposition should unite to topple the government."

On August 4, in remarks before the Asia Society of New York, the AP reported Aquino as saying of his own future role that he would "under no circumstances accept the leadership in a post-Marcos government. I have lost my appetite for power." Still, three days later, again according to AFP, Ninoy waffled: "should the regime fall, he might consider heading a new Manila government if there was a popular cry for him to do so." On August 3, he was again militantly telling Julia Wallace of the Dallas *Times Herald* that he was "headed for New York to begin another chapter in what the reporter called his "cloak-and-dagger crusade to topple a government 12,000 miles away." She continued: "He is buying arms from Nicaragua at five times their cost. He talks of helping to raise funds—which he says now total \$199 million—through kidnapping, bank robberies and threats."

These repetitive reversals of position and policy strongly suggested that far from having emerged from prison purged of ambition and interested only in peace and conciliation, Aquino was the old, reckless, go-for-broke Ninoy with whom political observers in the Philippines had long been familiar. Three-plus years later, however, when Aquino was about to return to the Philippines, his Harvard friends who knew him as a convinced and convincing (articulate!) apostle of Gandhi and non-violence, were apparently unacquainted with the judgments of those Filipinos who knew him far better. In the latter's judgment, Ninoy by then felt that he could not afford to wait any longer to return, or Filipinos might suspect that he was no longer a fighter (and hence transfer their loyalties to another) suitable to replace a President who was believed soon to die.

... Returning to the hot-and-cold record of Senator Aquino's early interviews in the United States, we refer to a conference on July 29, 1980 of members of the Defense Press Corps in Manila, at which Deputy Defense Minister Barbero tried to sum up Aquino's position. Relying on a four page reproduction of the Hollie interview, Barbero cited Aquino himself who by telephone had confirmed

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

that Hollie's account was true. Barbero then distributed copies of the interview, which included the following statements:

Aquino said when Marcos agreed to allow him to come to the United States for surgery, it was after he (Aquino) had been in solitary confinement since martial law was decreed in 1972.

It was to appear a great humanitarian gesture. It was to make people believe I (Aquino) had made a deal with Marcos to keep my mouth shut. I did not make a deal.

Hollie says while Aquino is attempting to build a moderate coalition to oppose Marcos, he is also sending tapes/letters about meetings to President Marcos through intermediaries.

The Hollie interview account says that while preaching democracy, Aquino is not demanding that Marcos step down or that martial law should be lifted.

On this score, Hollie quoted Aquino as having said: "We accomplish nothing by chaos. What we want is a smooth transition from martial law to democracy."

To accomplish this goal, Hollie wrote, "Aquino is trying to form a coalition of anti-Marcos factions and smooth over differences among divergent forces in the Philippines."

. . . As of the Hollie interview, Aquino apparently hoped to build a coalition of non-violent oppositionist leaders, but there would be later reversals.

New York: Ninoy's Asia Society Speech

It seems likely that Aquino's fire-eating Asia Society speech advocating violence in various forms (assassinations, kidnaping, robberies and arson), was delivered on the recommendation of Steve Psinakis, who in his book *Two Terrorists Meet*, in effect declared himself the leader of the violent Opposition. The speech of course produced waves in Manila and Washington. Whether it advanced Ninoy's leadership among Filipinos abroad is dubious. Psinakis, as the leader of the urban guerilla movement, advocated violence, but it is certain that he did not speak for the majority of the exiled Opposition. Some years earlier, Manglapus' Movement for a Free Philippines, which has campaigned to raise money for an underground radio station had failed, and two years before, the MFP's campaign to solicit funds to purchase Armalites for "freedom fighters" in the Philippines was unsuccessful. It is also certain that the great majority of the Opposition in the Philippines was still opposed to violent resistance. President Marcos reacted with scorn and contempt to the Asia Society speech, saying that if Ninoy had actually said what he was reported to have said, "he should have had a brain as well as a heart operation." AFP Chief of Staff General Romeo Espino's cooler but more deadly remarks, however, reflected the AFP's long-cherished view that Aquino was simply running true to form: he was either a Communists or a strong sympathizer; his public dedication to violence simply brought into the open what they believed they had known of Aquino since the early Fifties. Espino said:

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

There is nothing surprising in Aquino's reported decision to move in with certain groups abroad which, for some years now, have been openly advocating the overthrow of the government.

This seems consistent with the man and his record, notwithstanding the covenants to return to the Philippines and to refrain from political activities which he had voluntarily made in connection with his trip abroad.

None of these covenants were sought as a condition for his release from the military detention cell. He made them. And now he has decided to break them.

But we must now express regrets that in declaring his true colors, he has casually advocated a campaign of violence and terrorism in the country as a tactic for the achievement of political and personal goals.

One result of the saber-rattling on Ninoy's part was to bring down official U. S. warnings on his head. He was informed that buying guns or raising funds for a campaign of violence would violate U. S. laws. Whatever sobered him up, Ninoy, a veteran of sudden reversals, outwardly threw off the influence of advisers like Psinakis and presented himself on the Harvard campus as if not a dove, then wholly a believer in *satyagraha*, Gandhi's non-violence. Harvard's largely McGovernite faculty astonishingly found the transformation not only pleasing but convincing.

Detroit

During the first week of September, Aquino continued his erratic approval and denial of support for violent revolution. In a speech full of internal contradictions made in Detroit before a gathering of the Movement for a Free Philippines, whose head had long been Raul Manglapus, the contradictions were simultaneous rather than successive. Comparing his crusade to other revolutions planned from abroad, Aquino in an extemporaneous speech apparently designed to avoid infringement of U. S. laws, was reported by PNA as saying: "I am only asking for those kindred spirits who are willing to return to our country and carry the torch of freedom. And as those [trail?] blazing pioneers in the past have done it, we will do it." He coupled this appeal with a reference to the prevailing Filipino political culture by coupling it with a blunt warning that opportunists would be severely dealt with: "If they are thinking of joining the cause because if we win you will be the director of the bureau of customs or the director of the SSS (social security system), forget it because believe you me, I'll line you up on the wall, and this is the pledge I give you." In the reporter's words, Aquino "waxed hot and cold"—as he had been doing ever since his departure from Dallas: "While claiming at one point that he was for a peaceful transition in his homeland, he also repeatedly spoke about fighting a revolutionary war and stressed that the downfall of the government was inevitable."

Waxing hot, he threatened that the Philippine government "must accept the torch." Cooling off, he said he had "lost his appetite for power" while imprison-

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

ed, where he said he did not die thanks to two miracles—surviving both his hunger strike in 1975 and his heart attack in 1980. Still, his reference to “accepting the torch,” it could be argued, was a veiled endorsement of the Light-A-Fire Movement in the Philippines:

Aquino identified himself with the cause of the Light-A-Fire Movement held responsible for a series of major destructive fires in Manila last year and whose members are now on trial for subversion.

He cited the movement's leader, Eduardo Olaguer, and said, “In the name of all those people now in jail, I say let us stand as one man and fight for this cause and fight for their freedom.”

Ninoy seldom had to face rebuttals in the United States, but on this occasion, his friend, ex-Huk *Supremo* Luis Taruc, by an odd coincidence, was then in Troy, only fifteen miles from Detroit, and challenged Aquino to abandon his appeals to violence. Ninoy had befriended Taruc over twenty years earlier. Taruc claiming that Aquino was promoting the cause of discredited politicians from the Old Society, now offered to intercede for Aquino with Marcos as Aquino had championed his cause with Magsaysay:

“I would like to talk to him now, and for the sake of our country and people, ask him to keep his word, and return with me to the Philippines where I will ask President Marcos to give him amnesty,” Taruc said.

Taruc said “Filipinos do not like people who do not have a word of honor and ‘utang na loob’.” (obligation) So I will ask Ninoy to keep his word by refraining from political activity and returning home.

Taruc said that bitter experience had taught him that violence was not the solution:

Ninoy should take a lesson from me because of what I've gone through. Violence is not the way to initiate social reform. Not only does violence cause so much suffering and destruction but, it also leaves an ugly mess . . . a feeling of bitterness among people that lingers for a long time.

Washington

The Washington Star Interview

On August 21, that fateful date (1971, at Plaza Miranda, and 1983, at the Manila Airport) appeared an Aquino interview in the *Washington Star*, which seemed to show that Ninoy had finally settled on what should be his expatriate *persona*. Written by hero-worshipping staff writer Sandra McElwaine, Ninoy was pictured as a modern Jesus Christ suffering for democracy in the Philippines. The reporter commenced by repeating the fiction that Ninoy had spent seven years and seven months in *solitary confinement*. (Later in the interview, she conceded that after an actual Gethsemane of forty days or so, he was detained for most of the time under conditions exceptional in their liberality). First, however, McElwaine follows Ninoy during his time of agony:

“At first I cried like a baby, prayed, and then cursed God, asking ‘Where’s

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

justice?" I was afraid to eat, the food might be drugged or poisoned."

He excitedly acts out some of the indignities he suffered; the blind-folding, the stripping. "They removed everything from the tiny cell, even the Bible," he exclaims. Losing 30 pounds and hitting rock bottom, Aquino found solace in prayer.

After these weeks of humiliation, however, came relief:

He eventually was transferred to a jail in Manila, back to books, writing paper and conjugal visits, first once a month and later twice a week.

"Those visits," he throws back his head with uncontrolled mirth, "My wife really had to have guts for those. We were under scrutiny of closed circuit TV and a one-way mirror. She was sure we would end up on someone's home video. She still dreams of those monitors now."

In later years there also were visits home for anniversaries and birthdays. The interviewer then turned to Ninoy's hunger strike in 1975:

In 1975, Aquino claims he lost the will to live and went on a hunger strike that lasted 40 days and 40 nights. His survival was the turning point of his life. "I knew then that nothing could touch me," he says emotionally, "I knew the meaning of patience and was beyond threats."

Aquino also discussed with McElwaine a visit he had made to Marcos during his period of detention. Marcos

inquired what he [Aquino] would do if he was released. Denied both newspapers and a radio, Aquino responded that he did not know the reactions of the populace to the regime, that if they were happy he would return to the provinces, if they were discontented he would mount a platform and denounce the government.

Simply ignoring the testimony made before the court martial which reached a guilty verdict, Aquino said he had "written an impassioned letter to the Supreme Court, calling his trial 'the greatest mockery of justice,' which led to his sentence being suspended, though he remained in prison."

McElwaine, after relating the events that led to Ninoy's being permitted to leave the Philippines for a heart bypass operation in Dallas, described his current activities: "Aquino is speaking out, warning of the gathering storm of revolution that threatens to envelop the Philippines." Aquino then turned to what he hoped to accomplish in the United States, avoiding any reference to buying guns, recruiting troops or organizing conspiracies:

"All we're asking is that our freedoms be restored," he pleads. "We're asking the U. S. not to support a repressive regime any longer. To save himself Marcos must start relaxing his grip. Martial law is coming to an end, whether it's peaceful or bloody is up to him. If he does not ease up there will be massive urban guerilla warfare."

After repeating the theme that he was no longer interested in power, Aquino ended in the folksy manner that he usually assumed in speaking both to American journalists and Harvard intellectuals:

He insists that he will return to the islands one day soon, though he has lost all appetite for political power. He claims he has two missions left: To see the present dictatorship dismantled, democracy restored, and to disprove the

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

myth that crime pays.

"Gosh almighty," says Aquino boyishly, "Marcos took away our freedom, enriched himself in office and is that it? Oh, no. He claps his hands. "Marcos can go out in a blaze of glory, or a blaze."

The Karnow Interview

A November interview with Stanley Karnow, who had been a Pulitzer Award winner, struck the notes that would characterize Ninoy's Harvard style. Karnow, a reputable and knowledgeable newspaperman, but one who knew little of the Philippines, was sympathetic but shrewd and cautious in evaluating Aquino. He began by making a point too often forgotten, both in 1980 and 1987: based on their respective records, if their positions had been reversed, Marcos,—not Aquino, would have been in jail:

Despite their differences, Aquino and Marcos grudgingly respect each other. Both are rough-and-tumble politicians whose careers date back to the days when democracy in the Philippines bordered on anarchy.⁴⁶ Indeed, I suspect that Aquino would have jailed Marcos had he gained the upper hand.

Karnow notes that Aquino did not deny that Marcos had done some good things:

Even now, Aquino does not denounce Marcos completely. He credits him with renovating the Philippine tax system, introducing land reform and initiating birth control programs. [But see Chapter III for Ninoy's rejection of birth control.] With all his faults, Aquino adds, Marcos also brought bright young technocrats into the Philippine bureaucracy.

The thoughtful journalist soberly assessed the chances for a political deal, and found them promising, provided Marcos was prepared to dismantle his apparatus of control:

Marcos [meanwhile] had offered Aquino a "high post" in his government. Marcos' ostentatious wife Imelda has intimated to Aquino as well that her husband considers him to be his heir apparent. And after all, Marcos did authorize Aquino to come to the United States.

So there is room for a deal between them. But Aquino will not compromise unless Marcos restores press freedom, gives students the right of assembly, unshackles labor unions and agrees to hold "honest, clean, orderly elections." In short, Aquino demands an end to the Marcos dictatorship.

Karnow's acute ear pins down the now Harvard *persona* of Aquino: he is the teacher-cum-politician: "While he sometimes sounds like a civics teacher, Aquino has few illusions that even relatively benign despots like Marcos yield power easily."

The newspaperman's analyses of Aquino's problem as an expatriate leader is judicious:

⁴⁶ Incidentally, Bonner (p. 101) reached the same verdict in *Waltzing*. "[Marcos and Aquino] were marked more by what they had in common than their differences."

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

The growing assortment of dissidents in the Philippines is rapidly coming radicalized, and many acclaim Aquino as their leader. A few weeks ago, for instance a group involved in a Manila bomb plot alleged that Aquino had ordered the operation.

Aquino denies such connections. Yet he refrains from disavowing even the extremist anti-Marcos forces because he cannot afford to lose his credibility as the symbol of opposition. For that reason, too, he must be tough on Marcos.

. . . During the period 1980-1981, Ninoy later told Teddy Benigno, he spent much of his time looking for someone who could serve as go-between with Marcos: "I devoted my time looking for a man who could talk to Marcos and Marcos would listen. I thought of the Pope. I thought of the American President. I thought of an American academician. I thought of a banker. I was looking for a Filipino. Cardinal Sin. Someone who may be a relative who can present to Mr. Marcos some of the unpalatable truths where he will not take umbrage and who will broker. . ." By April 1982, according to Rafael Salas, whom he met at Gerry Roxas' wake, Ninoy felt harrassed by not having a valid passport:

Imelda refused to let him have his passport, thus making it difficult for him to travel and impossible for him to return to the Philippines. He had several scenarios on his homecoming and one was the mourner accompanying him the body of Gerry Roxas. Ninoy assumed that the publicity generated by such a ploy would deter Marcos from doing him harm. But when the time came for taking Gerry's body home, Ninoy had changed his mind about accompanying it there.

Boston

The Mamot Interview (July 1982)

Patricio Mamot, a Filipino expatriate who grew up in the Manila slums, had been a Marcos supporter and awardee, but returned to the Philippines in 1983 and staged a hunger strike against the regime when Marines expelled squatters from the Araneta-owned Tatalon estate. On July 18, 1982, he interviewed Ninoy at great length at his home in Chestnut Hill, Boston and later reproduced the taped interview. It showed Ninoy as characteristically inconsistent and self-contradictory. (Author's comments are placed in brackets).

(1) On the role of the military in the Philippines

Aquino tells Mamot that the Philippine Army is both a mercenary army and volunteer army: "It is a mercenary army in the sense that we don't have any draftees. They are all professional soldiers. They go there for the pay. They go there as a profession. It is a volunteer army; it is a mercenary army." [Like Emerson, Ninoy could truly say that consistency was the hobgoblin of little minds.] In Aquino's opinion, Marcos transformed the Philippine army into a Marcos army [This is accurate as a broad generalization]: "For six years he was able to remove all the independent-minded army officers [Many, but not all] . . . From 1966 to 1972, Marcos exercised his powers as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. . . Mind you, in the first two years of his administration, aside from being the President of the Republic, he held the

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

defense portfolio. He was his own defense minister. So all of the officers got the message: You either play ball with Marcos or you were out. You either kiss his ass, so to speak, and lick his boots or you were out!" [There was truth in this statement, but there was also great exaggeration. The fact that he was his own Defense Minister for two years had little to do with the situation. When Mata and Ponce Enrile were his Defense Ministers, the President still called the shots. A further statement that Marcos "Ilocanized" the Armed Forces is broadly correct, but Ninoy's friend Senator Diokno in 1965 told the author that this was an asset: Marcos was for that very reason essential to the Nacionalistas; he would neutralize the Armed Forces and thus could win over Macapagal.]

Aquino also found it sinister that most of the inductees from Mindanao were Ilocanos: "did you know that the recruits in Mindanao were Ilocanos predominantly? Now why should there be predominantly Ilocano recruits in Mindanao? So you could see he was changing the tribal complex. . . ." [This attributes to Marcos manipulation what was rather a reflection of the pioneering spirit of the Ilocanos. Marcos didn't put them there; they went by themselves.] Then follows an absurdity: "All the officers now that are in the Armed Forces establishment have all been handpicked by Marcos." [This is characteristic Aquino hyperbole. Had he send "all Generals" or even "all full Colonels and Generals," he might have had an arguable case.]

(2) On gun-holders and martial law

"Three years before Martial law, Marcos liberalized the carrying of firearms in the Philippines. Anybody can walk into the PC (Philippine Constabulary), register his firearms, even if you had a machinegun you can register it and you can possess it. It was part of a strategy, . . . Marcos wanted to bring from the underground to aboveground all the firearms in the Philippines, and therefore identify the owners. . . ." [This assertion seems persuasive.] He said: "*Sigui* (okay), we will allow anybody to bear arms, just register them. That's all I am asking. I am not confiscating them from you. Some people were fooled by this. So they took out their guns from their arm caches, registered them and they can keep them. So there were about 700,000 firearms registered with the government." [The implication of this charge is that Marcos wanted to seize the guns of his opponents. . . . Probably, but it omits mention of the fact that Ninoy, along with most provincial political leaders owned arsenals, and that, along with them, he was clearly guilty, after martial law had forbidden them, of the charge of illegal possession of weapons.]

(3) On the student riots and government provocation

Ninoy here argues the consistent position of the Left: the Left is never aggressive, but only defensive. Whether students or urban strikers or farmers, they are always made the objects of provocation by the government or its security forces. [this happens frequently, not by any means always]

Marcos sent in provocateurs among the students. His own agents agitated the students: "Common, demonstrate." And the students being naive fell for his trap. And when the students demonstrated, Marcos' agents were throwing

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

grenades, they were throwing bombs, and he was blaming the terrorists. And then when these escalated, and got out of hand, then he said: "the time has come to crack down. . ."

(4) On the absence of organized resistance

"You cannot escape . . . reality. In other words, you can either adopt . . . Gandhi's massive civil disobedience, or just go along with the tide. Now 95 percent of the people will go along with the tide." [Just like the Germans, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russians went along with their masters.] "Now in the hierarchy of values of people, the number one hierarchy, and this many Americans forget, is survival. Here in America you talk of freedom, you talk of liberty, etc. because you are an affluent society. But in a poor society, the first priority is how to survive tomorrow. So, if Marcos tells you: "keep out of politics, and mind your own business, and nothing will happen to you," chances are that you will follow that dictate." Now, however, Aquino argued, it was time for a Moses or a Martin Luther King to appear in the Philippines.

(5) Filipino psychology and the current political situation

Aquino's discussion of Filipino passivity is the only part of the Mamot interview which was coherent and convincing. Ninoy explained,—and emphasized his conviction—that Marcos was dying:

The Filipino, as you know, is a very religious man. Maybe I would say a fatalistic man. So we have a word in our lexicon that says "*bahala na*" (Leave it to God). So as far as the Filipinos are concerned, they have a saying: "kina-habababa ng prosisyon, sa simbahan din ang tuloy" (No matter how long the procession, it will ultimately lead to the Church), or "walang utang na hindi binabayaran" (no debt will remain unpaid). These are Filipino proverbs, Filipino sayings . . . if Marcos has done wrong, somehow, somewhere he will be made to account for all the wrongs he has done. And God will take care. So, the common view in the Philippines is: "Paciensia ka na lang, sandali na lang ito, mamatay na ang lintik na iyan" (Be patient; it will not be long before the S.O.B. dies). And I think he really is dying. I do believe Marcos is now living on numbered days. I don't give him two years. . . He has an advanced Lupus case. . .

Apart from passivity (Ninoy continued), there were two possible positions: the moderate—to fight legally, and the revolutionary—"the nation will arise like the Phoenix". [Aquino did not say which policy he now favored.] He first told Mamot he would return to the Philippines in the near future, but then emphasized he would decide just when the time was ripe]: "next week, next month, next year." He would "join the freedom struggle as one of the soldiers." Pressed to explain when the time would be right, Aquino quoted the Arabs and Rizal to the effect that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear; when the baby has reached full term, it will be born:

You cannot force it. You just have to wait. Now the people will indicate to you when they are ready. Right now I believe the Philippines is moving towards a very dangerous revolutionary situation. The Philippines external debt is now \$18 billion. By next year, it will be \$20 billion. And there is no way to restructure that. Unemployment is now stalking the land. It is already

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

beyond 20 percent. . . There are certain areas now outside of Manila where after sundown people do not venture the streets anymore because the dissidents are controlling the outlying areas. And these are only about 30 miles from Manila.

Mamot sought to question Ninoy's analysis; Boston was a long way from the Philippines, but Ninoy, like expatriates everywhere and at all times, "had his sources." He cited a secret military report from the Bicol to the effect that "after sundown the military can not go out without a one-platoon strength, with armored cars. They get ambushed. . ." [This may very well have been true of certain Bicol towns, but they were five times 30 miles from Manila.]

In the last analysis, Ninoy found himself saying to Mamot, a revolution *must* be violent. Those benefiting from the status quo would fight to keep their privileges. When Mamot asked him if he was in fact the leader of "this terrorist groups," Ninoy rejected the name of terrorist, preferring "freedom fighter." He added: "But that I am leading a group that intends to unseat him [Marcos] and see his early demise, I agree. This guy has committed the greatest crime against our people and he must be punished."

Aquino conceded what Mamot said was Laurel's characterization of Marcos as "not brutal": "You don't have to be brutal to be a dictator." A "dictator", Ninoy explained, was "a man who dictates everything that happens in the country." He was responsible to no one, no institution—Congress, Courts or regime except maybe God. He had "rammed [through] a law giving him immunity for any act performed as President down the throat of the Filipino people." This would give him an automatic pardon if he should "order the killing of one hundred people in a demonstration at the Luneta."

Aquino then discussed the reason why Marcos was not bloodthirsty: it would be "counterproductive." Threats were more effective: "But that does not mean to say that he is not a bad man. He is only a wily man, a cunning man, a calculating man, and a more intelligent dictator, maybe better than Anastacio Somoza. [An accurate judgment.] That's why he lasts all these long years. He may be like Franco. Maybe better."

At only one point in the interview was Senator Aquino clearly uncomfortable. That was when Mamot questioned his capacity to cling to the leadership of the Opposition if he remained abroad. [Ninoy was an expatriate against his will. He had been imprisoned, and there was a death sentence hanging over his head—in fact probably *two* death sentences, because he was later charged with being the leader of the urban guerilla movement in Manila] :

MAMOT: . . . I heard from some Filipinos saying that as long as Senator Benigno Aquino is in the United States, he will never become an effective leader. He cannot be a voice (for) Filipino people oppressed by President Marcos. Therefore, in a way what you are doing is an exercise in futility. . .

AQUINO: Maybe.

MAMOT. Do you?

AQUINO: I don't believe that, but if those people believe that, I respect their views.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

MAMOT: Are you not going to do something about it?

AQUINO: About what? Convince those people?

MAMOT: That you are occupying . . . you are playing a leadership role. If they say you are not effective anymore because you are away from the Philippines. . .

AQUINO: No. Some people say that. All right. Do you want me to convince them otherwise?

MAMOT: I do not know.

AQUINO: It is not my business. If they believe that, that is their business. Yeah, I am doing what I think I am [should be?] doing. And I think I am doing OK.

Mamot then called attention to Aquino's statement that Marcos was dying. Aquino was then driven to claim, not leadership, but the role of simple soldier. [His disclaimers sounded hollow and unconvincing, requiring him to eliminate himself, at 50 years of age, as too old(!)]:

I have only one ambition in life. That's to see democracy restored in our country. And then go back home and end this life as an exile. And go back to my province and retire. I will be 50 by November (1982). I have done enough. The time has come for the younger leadership in the country to rise up. That is my job now. To see to it that this young leadership will have a chance to rise up. Whoever they are, I don't know. But my job is to prepare for that democratic process to be restored.

Mamot pressed Aquino on this strange scenario: "Let's not be naive. Governments have been ruled by strong men, when strong men died, other groups of leaders take the helm of the government and they resort to the same kind of authoritarian rule." Aquino replied that such developments would bring him out of retirement again, and finally to another fervid Patrick Henry-like affirmation of democracy or death.

Mamot failed to provoke Aquino by reminding him that many regarded him as a Leftist (So what? said Aquino), but the suggestion that he had a minimal following touched him to the quick. It led to a volcanic eruption in which Aquino, who could passionately affirm both elements of a contradiction and change political policies without shipping a beat, alleged that he cared nothing for leadership, nothing for position. He was willing to die, alone, a martyr to democracy [Though some of Aquino's statement was marred by faulty recording or reproduction, his meaning was clear enough]:

I don't care whether I have a following. I believe in a principle. I will fight for principle, even if I am alone. . . I don't care whether I have a following. If democracy is imperiled in the country, I would be the last man to fight for it. I stayed in jail for seven years and seven months. And Marcos offered me all kinds of positions, and I refused, because I told him: "You have committed the original sin of killing democracy. You restore democracy, you don't have to talk to me. But don't restore democracy, I will fight you to death." I don't care about following. I don't care what people say.

Mamot's next question, seeking to explore Ninoy's willingness to accept the Leftist label, led Aquino to request Mamot to turn off the recording. A note by

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

Mamot explains:

At this juncture, Senator Aquino requested me to turn off the tape recorder, which I did. Among the compelling and forceful statements he said was that "I am writing a book about my thoughts of confinement. I am calling it, *The Journal of a Searching Soul*." Senator Aquino had one important proviso: "It must only be published ten years after my death." I asked why and his answer: "It will hurt many, many of my colleagues, even my close political friends."

... Aquino shared a thematically forceful thought, which he requested me not to publish it within a foreseeable future. And I made a promise that the thought he will be sharing with me *will only be published ten years after his death*.

After Aquino had reprimanded Mamot for tolerating the Marcos regime and offered a half-baked commentary on historians and the role of objectivity in historical writing, the interview continued, with Aquino damning the faint hearts in the Philippines who were "ready to fight to the last drop of *your* blood." He referred to Rizal, who had in contrast, willingly made the supreme sacrifice:

That's why [Filipino passivity] Rizal had to die. That's why we were under the Spaniards for three hundred years. And it required a Rizal to articulate all of this in his two novels. And such a supreme sacrifice of offering himself.

That's why we have a Bonifacio. We are only now honoring him. He is the original leftist. They took the cudgels, when even Rizal said it cannot be done. "We have nothing. 'Ano ang ilalaban mo sa mga Kastila? Sa kanyon? Talibong? Laway?'" (With what will you fight the Spaniards? Cannon? Knives? Talk?) But Bonifacio took his people in Pugad Lawin, tore up their cedula (I. D.'s). Enough is enough. "Kung mamamatay, okay lang" (If we die, it's all right). But we must fight for our freedom. Now these are the greatest heroes of the Philippines and I cannot find a greater model.

The interview ended with Aquino assuring Mamot that there were "hundreds" of Filipinos who could be leaders in the Philippines, mentioning Rafael Salas and Senators Laurel, Diokno and Salonga. Manglapus had been doing his best, but he was too old. Finally, in a rhapsodic *coda*, Ninoy pronounced what would become a Cory battlecry after February 1985: "We will always say: 'we don't want Marcos to return, do you?' That would be the new battlecry: 'Vote, otherwise you will be ushering [sic] a dictatorship that we despise'."

... However inspired and inspiring a battlecry, this was not, despite Cory's later insistence, a government program.

San Francisco

Mother Jones Interview (May 1983)

Nearly a year later, the Leftist *Mother Jones* did a long and chaotic interview with Aquino while the interviewee held in his lap "a gift from a friend in the Philippines,"—a Life of Mahatma Gandhi. On this occasion, Ninoy referred to

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

himself variously as a “moderate,” a “Jeffersonian,” an “elite oppositionist,” an “opposition democrat,” and a “Leftist Socialist.” *MJ* found it disappointing both that Aquino “harbored an almost naive trust in the rationality of U. S. foreign policy,” and believed that “the State Department ultimately learned from its own mistakes.” It was distressed that Aquino felt that the only way the Philippines could be returned to a liberal democracy was “for the U. S. government to exert pressure on Manila,” but Ninoy gave no ground to his interviewer on this point. He pictured his forthcoming fight against Marcos as a David vs. Goliath theatrical spectacular:

... I can drag him into one field where I can fight him, and that's the moral field. Imagine it, two leaders—one in prison and the other one in a palace. The contrast is great. One guy, sentenced to death, is released, goes to America, lives in comfort in Boston, then voluntarily comes back in self-abnegation. He goes back to prison because his people are suffering and he must share their suffering. Now, how to hell do you think Marcos will see that? It can be seen two ways. Either I'm the greatest human saint around or I'm a nut. Take your choice. Every day someone will suggest that he shoot me. But he won't shoot me.

When *MJ* protested that he might be left to die in prison, Ninoy was ready with a rebuttal: “But if I die in his prison, do you think people will believe he didn't kill me? On the contrary. So, he will keep me alive because he knows the moment I die, I am the martyr like Martin Luther King. And he wouldn't want that.” [This argument is still convincing.]

Aquino beguilingly theorized that the Communists hated him more than Marcos, “because I'm a Left Socialist. Communists don't like Left Socialists. They sing their song, but they're not Commies.” [We must pause to note that what Ninoy says is true, but the premise that he is more the Communists' enemy than Marcos is without foundation.] A few moments later, the “Left Socialist” Aquino, recognizing no inconsistency, bursts out, “I'm a fanatic of Jeffersonian democracy!” He had, he confided to *MJ*, visited the Communist countries, which “had improved, but the West was still ahead.” In other words, “in spite of the faults of Marcos, he's still an angel compared to the Communists.”

When his *MJ* interviewer reproached him with the standard arguments of the Left, Ninoy, in language he judged appropriate to *MJ* readers, contemptuously rejected them:

... none of these jokers that you talked to ever won a post of dogcatcher in my country. I've never lost an election. ... I say to the same people you speak of, “You guys are here in America. You hate America virulently. You attack the goddamn bases. You attack the multi-nationals. So why don't you pack up and go to Russia?” Second, I say, “You are products of American education. Ph.D.'s from Princeton and Berkeley. Now, if you are so brave, why don't you go home?” *My credentials are seven years and seven months in jail.* ... Return free elections to my country and they won't get ten percent. They've got to do it by the gun. I'm going to do it by the ballot. In my province they never won. You see, my biggest danger is not Marcos, it's the Communists, because they know I'm going to set them back 40 years.

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

This is Ninoy at his cleverest in dealing with Americans—folksy, articulate, careless of facts. He had never told Filipinos to “pack up and go to Russia,” and it was an exaggeration that the Communists never won in his province. They dominated certain towns and areas. But he has scored with the reference to his stigmata, his “credentials of 7 years and 7 months,” even if for the last-five-plus years, it was by his own choice. Ninoy had one other good item for *MJ*: He had no fear of the political arm of the Filipino Communists: he would legitimize their party provided they laid down their arms: “Amnesty for all. Only one condition: don’t pick up the gun.”

Still, Ninoy lamented, the Filipino was an inveterate *petit bourgeois*: “he loves private property. The poorest Filipino wants a little house he can call his own. He wants to educate his children. He believes in his God, whatever god that is. And he’s anarchic.” *MJ* then threw him a curve: it wanted to know whether Ninoy had “learned anything from the Communists?”, and got the admission it was looking for: “I owe some of my progressive ideas to them. Every time I meet them, I pick their brains.” Aquino is even more accommodating when *MJ* invites Ninoy’s view of President Reagan: “The Reagan view, stemming from the McCarthy era, is that they [the Communists] are evil. Don’t even touch them. Give the Russians the slightest chance and they’ll put one over on you.” Aquino, now the cool hipster, continued by comparing the Marcos attitudes toward Reagan and President Carter: “With Reagan, Marcos thinks: Now that’s some kid. He’s a member of the team. It’s a perception. Maybe it’s not true, but that’s exactly how Marcos perceives it. In the four years that Carter was in office he never invited Marcos to the White House; that was symbolic.” Nonetheless, Ninoy believed that some Americans were good, even some multinationals: “There are some multinationals that are good, and we must use them. How the hell are you going to progress without them? . . . You have the laws and you have the sovereignty. You can even nationalize them. So why so scared of multinational? You should be scared only if you’re afraid you can be bribed.” [A dangerous admission and quite true.]

At this date, Aquino clearly thought it likely that the Philippine military would stage a *coup*, adding a characteristic Ninoy flourish by claiming that the military would use Imelda as a front and then depose her, like Isabel Peron, later. . . Next, figuratively donning his Gandhian loincloth, Ninoy expostulated that “the killers of today can’t be the leaders of tomorrow.” Even so, he conceded, the moderates faced a dilemma. If you adopted Mao’s formula and seized a gun, “. . . the moment you take that path, kid, you’re an amateur compared to the Communists. They’ve been at it for 30 years. You will end up bedding with them, and then . . . like Nicaragua—they take over.” In the end, Ninoy insisted, Marcos desperately needed the assistance of the United States, which could and should force Marcos to the negotiating table to deal with the opposition. Not unexpectedly, he had advice for President Reagan: “If I were Reagan, I would go to Marcos and tell him: ‘Ferdie, we like you. You’re a staunch friend of America. But we think, for your own good, for the good of

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

your people, for the good of the alliance, for the good of the free world, for the good of the region, you have to liberalize. You've got to bring back freedom.'"⁴⁷ As for the American military bases, Aquino wanted them out, but not precipitately: "We cannot remove the bases tomorrow and destabilize that region, particularly while the Russians are building in Camranh Bay. Otherwise we will surely be changing masters. But I'm going to tell America I don't want these bases permanently. The sooner you remove them, the better."

Ninoy emphasized that he thought he could still do business with Marcos:

I'm not predisposed to say that Marcos is all evil. I think if I go there and give myself up, he will accept it as a token of sincerity. I think he will be more inclined to say, "Well, maybe this guy has something to say." He may not love but he will respect me. I mean, *you respect a hero because he does something that you can't do*. In Marcos' wildest dreams though, he would never expect that, because the conventional wisdom is: Aquino's not coming home. Jesus, I mean, he's no living well in Boston. He's in the best America. Go back there? To that two-by-four cell? No way."

Ninoy said he believed that on the contrary, by returning, putting himself in the other man's power, he could win: "When I go back there, even those doubting Filipinos, even those Communists, deep in their hearts they will have some kind of respect: "Jesus Christ, he's done it. With that as my leverage, I can parley. But who knows—someone might shoot me." . . .

For most people, that would have been a superb exit line. But Ninoy was not only an actor, he was a *sig-a-siga* (show-off). He succeeded in topping himself with words that were quintessential Ninoy: "What the hell, you can die on a Monday, friend, or you can die on a Friday. We're all going to go. We've got to go somehow. I'd rather die before a firing squad to trigger a revolution for my people [in the end, he succeeded!] than get run over by a drunken driver in Boston." . . . Only a few men are given the opportunity to pronounce their own death sentence—and in pure Americanese at that.

The Esclamado Interview (July 1983)

Two months later, Ninoy was the subject of yet another interview, this time, one by Alex Esclamado, publisher of the Philippine-American opposition newspaper *Philippine News*. On this occasion, Ninoy was less brilliant than sombre. Esclamado, like others, had failed to dissuade him from returning, and Aquino was fatalistic: "I have decided even as early as 1975 that life is secondary. . . I am fully aware that this mission of mine may be my last. I fully realize that it is pregnant with risks. Considering the statements of President Marcos, one cannot escape the feeling that I have been set up for a kill." In Ninoy's opinion, the Marcos government was preparing a scenario in which the blame would fall on a

⁴⁷ In a rather less colloquial idiom, this was just what the U. S. Embassy was trying to tell President Marcos at this date.

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

reckless, foolhardy Aquino: "they're beginning to lay the groundwork that they are very sympathetic to me; that they want to protect me and that I'm crazy enough and headstrong enough to go against their advice and therefore I met my due fate." [In our opinion, this was a highly perceptive judgment.] Ninoy however rejected this Marcos defense in advance, using strangely legalistic language: "it is the obligation of the government to protect its citizens." He compared himself with the martyred Jose P. Rizal, as he would do several times in the next weeks. Rizal's relatives, he noted, had also advised *him* not to return.

Ninoy said that he had at first believed Mrs. Marcos when she had said that she was only expressing her personal views in advising against his return, but he now realized that it amounted to an official warning. When Esclamado hoped that "the tremendous preparations made for your return being made by the leaders of the Opposition" might strengthen the likelihood that he would be unharmed, Ninoy was dubious: "I hope so. But I wouldn't give a chance as more than 50/50 at this stage of the game. Until and unless the government reverses its decision, I do not know if I can return there on the scheduled time and without being able to meet them because I can get off-loaded at the end of the runway on the pretext that it's for my own protection and that they will bring me back directly to my cell at Fort Bonifacio." [The government may indeed have planned to force his aircraft to land elsewhere in the Philippines, but their scrambler planes failed to locate his carrier.].⁴⁸

Ninoy gave short shrift to Esclamado's claims that the "classical rule" of successful revolutions was that they were better organized from the outside. In rebuttal, Ninoy displayed his familiarity with several other recent revolutions:

That so-called knowledge is fallacious. There were leaders who led the liberation of their country from the outside, like Khomeini for example. There were leaders who were called in from the outside to help their government with the transitional period like Caramanlis of Greece, . . . You have also the case of Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador who was called back to head the military junta. But I can also cite you instances where the oppressive colonial powers negotiated with the very people in jail.

Ninoy's final remarks emphasized that his decision to return was firm; that only the precise date was yet to be determined.

Boston

The Benigno Interview (August 1, 1983)

Teodoro Benigno, who would later become Cory Aquino's press secretary, but who was then still the longtime Manila correspondent of *Agence France Press*, interviewed Aquino at his home three weeks before his arrival at Manila International Airport. Answering the question why the date had at last been set,

⁴⁸ Bonner, *Op. cit.*, p. 346

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Ninoy said "If I do not move now, if I do not attempt to reach President Marcos now, there will be nothing to reach for in five years. [Is this a slip, revealing his conviction Marcos is dying? If no, he makes a quick if not wholly convincing recovery.] Since President Marcos is still President until 1987, if he gives me a chance to talk to him, my plan is to plead with him for fair and honest elections. . . ." He acknowledged that he *could* wait, but he felt that "the road three, five years from now will be very bloody and very messy." By this time, however, Aquino was thinking of how Filipino businessmen could be mobilized to force Marcos to make concessions to the Opposition: "You have to convince the businessmen [that]: This is the beginning of the turn of the tide. You must now be bold and expand and invest. Because so long as your middle class, your entrepreneurs, are timid, are holding back, are scared, how the heck are you going to generate employment?" In Aquino's eyes, a recent testimonial dinner honoring Prime Minister Virata was indicative of the businessmen's worries. "You could see how the businessmen rallied. They rallied not because Virata was a charismatic leader or because they love him, but because he was standing for something they thought was a key to their survival. They rallied behind him to show Mr. Marcos that Virata is right."

In this final interview, Aquino once again turned to analyzing Right and Left polarities in the world, in certain cases presumably drawing on, even adopting the views (and language!) of his Harvard MIT associates. Two themes run through his analysis: the threat from the Right, and the inevitability of its failure:

. . . if Mr. Marcos dies tomorrow or should fade away from the scene, the rightists will run the government. At this point, there will be confrontation, a real bloody confrontation between left and right.

We are seeing today a situation like South Korea, Indonesia, Chile, Pakistan, Bangladesh. Now I'm saying they'll be throttled because they will be supported [he means "opposed"] by a superpower. They will stay for five, ten, 20 years. Maybe we can have another South Korea, who knows. We could have a right takeover like Park Chung Hee, then an enlightened technocrat taking over and then pick ourselves up from our own bootstraps. But this has to be by repression.

Now you could do it like Brazil, a military takeover. But then I could give you enough empirical data to show that other rightist takeovers failed. You have Pakistan, Bangladesh, Argentina, Uruguay, even Chile.

Ninoy was mildly hopeful that Cardinal Sin's suggestions of a national council might help: "Mr. Marcos can begin by maybe adopting Cardinal Sin's formula as a starter. A national advisory council, maybe to address itself to economic problems. Then, most probably, this could lead to the invitation of certain independent-minded and respected citizens to join the cabinet or even the judiciary." He emphasized that he did not want to provoke Marcos: "If I provoke him unnecessarily, then the reason for my mission might be scrapped. So what are the fundamentals here? I'm going home to help in the quest for national unity and reconciliation with justice. I'm hoping Mr. Marcos will allow

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

me to contribute in the speedy return of moral political processes to elections, and the full restoration of our democracy and freedom as we knew it in 1971.” [Ninoy, the symbol of 1971 politics, seemed unaware of the irony of his statement. The elections of 1971 were the bloodiest in history to that date. (232 killed, 250 wounded!)]

Quite certain that he would be returned to his Fort Bonifacio cell on arrival, Ninoy had his program planned: “The most important thing is: Will Mr. Marcos give us a chance to present our case to him personally? Now for this single opportunity, I am putting my life on the line. Just a chance to talk to him one on one. I know he doesn’t trust me. He thinks I’m not unreliable. Maybe he hates me. But all I’m asking in exchange for my life, for my freedom, is one hour to talk to him. After talking to him, after making my presentation, it’s up to him. But at that point, I can rest peacefully and say: I have done everything. I can do. . .” [The evaluation of this passage depends on whether Ninoy believed Marcos to be terminally ill.] Asked whether he would recommend participation in the 1984 elections, Ninoy answered affirmatively, and then went on to explain his interpretation of the Washington attitude, at that date, toward the Philippines:

The majority in the Washington administration would like to see a strengthening of democracy in the Philippines. . . The American people want it. They would like to see an improvement of human rights before they spend their taxpayers money. And the academics and scholars want it because they think stability of the bases can best be insured by greater democracy.

He was against retention of the U. S. bases, but he did not believe that neutrality was possible:

. . . in a choice between the two superpowers I will choose the U. S. Now some of my colleagues will say: But can’t you be a neutral? . . . Well, the reality of the situation is that unfortunately in this world, we middling powers, we small powers will simply have to choose. There is no such thing as neutrality. . .

On the more practical angle, . . . Unfortunately, as a result of Mr. Marcos’ profligacy, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are calling the tune. There is no way we can get out of that except by defaulting. . . The moment we do that, we cut ourselves from the Western world. No sane Filipino leadership will be able to do that.

. . . Strangely missing from this version of the Aquino interview is perhaps the most significant thing he allegedly told Benigno. According to Crisostomo, who cited a column by Aurora Magdalena of *Veritas*, Ninoy and Benigno also had the following discussion of “macho mystique”:

Ninoy, according to Benigno, asked him which the Filipinos preferred—courage or intelligence? The journalist answered, “Both” Ninoy said, “Choose one.” Benigno replied, “Courage.” “Right you are!” exclaimed Ninoy, adding that Filipinos as a rule went for fighters who slugged their way through, like Dommy Ursua, Speed Cabanela and even Pancho Villa, fighters who always took the offensive, not the counterpunchers. They preferred go-for-broke fighters who kept on wading in and throwing punches, come what may.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Then Ninoy . . . told him: "That's why I'm coming home. I want to prove to the Filipinos that I am not afraid. Because I know they respect courage above anything else!"

. . . All in all, the evidence of the Benigno interview strongly suggests that Ninoy had come to believe that if he was to enjoy U. S. support, he must return to the Philippines as an apostle of non-violence and reconciliation. What drove him to return, however, was not primarily any such Christian conscience or faith in Jeffersonian democracy, but his absolute determination not to lose the leadership of the Opposition. If the way to maintain his leadership was to stick his head into the lion's mouth, *Bahala na!* . . . When Rafael Salas met him during the summer in which he gave the *Mother Jones*, Esclamado and Benigno interviews, that wise and unprejudiced statesman made the matter plain:

The . . . last time I saw Ninoy was at the Hotel Helmsley, which is just beside the UNFPA offices in the Daily News Building. Ninoy and I talked about his plans to go home. He was anxious to go home. I think he wanted to drown the feeling that he was being left out of the Philippine political scene. The publicity he got on arriving in America had tapered off. Now other political leaders were getting more attention in the Philippines. He felt he had to go home to maintain leadership.

If Salas was correct (and the author believes him to have been correct), an unnoticed but quite remarkable fact emerges: Ninoy was returning to avoid losing the leadership of the Opposition (and the Presidency) – specifically to Doy Laurel, who after Gerry Roxas' death in 1982, was clearly the undisputed leader of the Opposition in the Philippines. As Imelda Marcos had cynically but accurately once told Doy, the two were inevitably deadly political rivals. . . This helps to explain the love-hate relationship that later developed between Doy and Cory.

Ninoy and Cory as Bostonians

It is not easy to write of Ninoy as the Bostonian of academic legend, because he is unrecognizable to those who knew him best before his imprisonment and who closely followed his speeches and interviews during his exile. The cynical could argue that he simply conned the Harvard and MIT faculties into accepting him for what he represented himself to have become. Not a single Harvard doubter's voice seems to have appeared in print. It must be remembered, however, that Ninoy was a super-actor, not least because he fully believed himself to be whatever role he was playing at the moment. Moreover, he had immense charm. Charisma takes different forms, and the good-hearted boyishness which obviously captivated the professors was one of Ninoy's several *persona*. However, if Hollywood's Joanne Woodward superbly played an Eve with three faces, Ninoy had no fewer than four—(1) the *gamin*, or mischievous juvenile, (2) the smart alec, (3) the demagogue—with which those who knew him best were all well acquainted, and (4) the apostle of Gandhian non-violence, the Ninoy image cherished by the Harvard-MIT *cognoscenti*, one with which the Filipinos at

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

home were unfamiliar before the publicity just preceding his return to Manila and after his assassination—a fiction, however, which bewitched the academics.

Apparently the first to be impressed was the distinguished authority on Southeast Asia, Dr. Guy Pauker, who met Aquino while he was convalescing from his triple bypass heart operation in Dallas. According to Pauker, who earlier, in their first meeting, had judged Ninoy to be exceptionally brilliant, found him “very weak,” but, he continued, “the first thing he said to me was ‘I’ve had a lot of time to think in jail, and I’ve realized the only solution is non-violence.’” According to the Harvard *Crimson*, it was Pauker who suggested the Harvard fellowship. Aquino agreed, “choosing to spend the next two years researching the history of democracy in the Philippines as part of the Center for International Affairs (CFIA) fellows program.” This is an unacceptable reductionism if not simply an inaccuracy. Pauker, apparently astonishingly unaware of Ninoy’s speeches endorsing violence on-and-off between 1980 and 1983, held tenaciously to his belief that the convalescent renunciant of violence was the true and enduring Aquino. Ninoy’s Boston meetings with politicians, Pauker believed, gave a false picture of his attitude: “Analysts assume Aquino used his asylum as a springboard for dissident activity . . . after Aquino predicted in a New York speech that the threat of guerrilla violence was severe, bombing by rebels soon broke out in Manila, and U. S. officials apparently assumed that he was connected with the incidents.” This is sheer partisanship, but Pauker, consistently for an academic, was sure he knew better than the U. S. government, citing his own earlier statements as evidence for what he called “the commitment to non-violence Aquino acquired in prison and during his years in the U. S.”

Other Harvard/MIT professors, all but one apparently unacquainted with the Philippine political culture and its ritualistic demonstrations of hearty *bonhomie* between often deadly opponents, mistook the cordial exchanges between Ninoy and members of President Marcos’ party as additional evidence that Ninoy had permanently enched violence. Dr. Samuel Huntington thought Ninoy’s warm, “likeable demeanor” was characterized by “fairness,” while Professor Leonard Unger, ex-U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, thought he “was not one to offer a sharp anti-Marcos diatribe. . .” These tributes to Ninoy by outstanding scholars and experienced diplomats offer impressive evidence of Ninoy’s charm, but they also suggest a curious unfamiliarity not only with Philippine politics, but an ivory tower ignorance of Ninoy’s off-campus statements during his Harvard-MIT sojourn. Perhaps the clue is to be found in the statements by MIT’s Dr. Lucien Pye (one who *had* written knowledgeably about the Philippines political culture) that Ninoy had “understood the meaning of a university.” To project his Gandhian *persona*, Ninoy had apparently been careful to deliver his fighting speeches off the University premises. . . Among the students, Ninoy was apparently best remembered for his glib tongue and rapid-fire recitation of Philippine statistics.

Still, the academicians *did* acknowledge that the Ninoy in the role of a Gandhi convert represented a change:

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Aquino's plans for a quiet, non-violent homecoming illustrate the changes in his approach that took place in recent years, said observers. At the height of his political career, Aquino surrounded himself with "a small private army" and other protection devices—helicopters, guards and an "arsenal," said one former associate. "He was a tough leader, but after jail he became a real philosopher."

... While Ninoy played the unfamiliar and earlier uncongenial part as student, Cory stuck to her usual role of housewife and mother. In the United States, without servants, this exacted a heavy toll. It was borne, as usual, with good-natured resignation. As she later told one interviewer, "I had to be good at cooking and cleaning to survive in Boston." One of her biggest thrills in the States, therefore, was eating out, "just anywhere, because it meant freeing her from one more meal to prepare, and the children, of dishes to wash." Even in a place not on the usual tourist path, the Aquinos' typical New England home never ran out of visiting friends who would stay for a day or so. There was such a continuous stream of visitors that Cory "sometimes wished out loud for disposable bedding." One result of the Filipino tradition that itinerant countrymen must be housed and fed was that, as one Boston *Globe* headline put it, Cory was "remembered by Newton neighbors as an unassuming wife, who lived in her husband's shadow."

Still, with Senator Aquino's assassination, legend-building at once also began for Cory—she had really been a trusted consultant of her husband! As Benjamin H. Brown, former director of the research program of CFIA and subsequently a great admirer of Mrs. Aquino, observed without batting an eyelash or offering a scintilla of evidence, "I don't think he made any significant political decisions without her full consent, including the decision to return to the Philippines. If she had not concurred, he would not have gone back." Those closer to the Aquinos, such as Cory's niece Alexandria Lichauco, stuck to the evidence: "Cory was always in the background regarding politics, and never dreamed of becoming president. I'm sure she thought that when she went back to the Philippines and her husband was buried, that would be the end of it." The *Globe* also noted the significance of Ninoy's failure to mention her name as a possible successor in the event of his death:

... no one may have been more surprised by her ascent to the presidency than Aquino herself. In Washington yesterday, she said that shortly before his death, her husband was asked who would replace him as the opposition leader if he were slain or imprisoned. He named four people, and none of them were me, a smiling Aquino told a television interviewer. Vice President Laurel had this to say days after the Revolution: "Ninoy never exposed her to any political activity. Cory was a very devoted mother and excellent housekeeper. If she had any latent capabilities other than from what I observed, I could not tell. It was not perceptible. When I visited the Aquinos together with Celia, Ninoy would say: 'Cory, why do the two of you not go and have a chat and leave me for a while with my *compadre*?' You know, he was a true macho. He even directed the family from jail, issuing orders to his wife and children. I have visited the Aquinos three times in Boston. Nothing had changed. . .

The Exile Years: Ninoy's Erratic U.S. Crusade

When Mrs. Aquino returned to Boston as President of the Philippines in September 1986, there were recollections of the couple which were less academic and more familiar to the folks back home. As the *Globe* put it,

It was a transformation that has stunned many who remember Benigno Aquino as an outgoing, charismatic man and his wife as a quiet woman whose role during political discussions with friends was to serve food and drinks.

Paul and Maureen Faraca, who live on nearby Mount Alvernia Road, jogged by the Aquino house early one morning in 1981, when armed guards jumped out of the bushes with guns. "We said, 'Whoaa,'" Faraca said.

The Faracas threw a neighborhood Christmas party in 1982, and were surprised when the Aquinos showed up. "They hadn't mixed up to that point," Faraca, a real estate developer, said.

During the party, the Aquinos were seldom more than a foot apart and maintained constant eye contact with each other. "She was always physically one pace behind him," Faraca said.

"She spoke mostly when spoken to," Maureen Faraca added. "She was very deferential to her husband."

Chapter VI

THE ASSASSINATION AND CORY'S TRANSFORMATION

As Aquino prepared to leave Boston for Manila, we must try to assess the thinking of the principal actors in the drama: Ninoy, Cory, President Marcos, Imelda Marcos and Salvador Laurel. Ninoy, who had been persuaded to postpone his departure for two weeks because of information transmitted by Imelda that there existed a conspiracy to assassinate him, would not further delay his departure, we think, because he was convinced that Marcos was dying, and that Mrs. Marcos, with General Ver's assistance, would seize power, shattering his dream of being elected as Marcos' successor. As he saw it, it was now or never for him—*bahala na!* . . . Cory had been persuaded by her husband that with the media protection he believed he had secured (world media representatives would accompany him on board his aircraft), the Palace would not dare to liquidate him on arrival but would return him to imprisonment. Still, she had her fingers crossed. She considered President Marcos a tyrant who would do anything to stay in power, but as usual, she let Ninoy make the political decisions, and said her prayers.

All along, whether from the perspective of the Palace, Boston, Washington or the American Embassy, the x factor was the President's health. Probably in all quarters, except for the President himself (when lucid), he was felt to be dying. So, in his lucid moments (probably most of the time) Marcos continued to feel confident that he held the whip hand, and that the Ninoy challenge could be contained, now probably easier in the Philippines than in the United States. Jail would be the right place for Ninoy, where he could be denied access to the world media. . . Imelda's position was far different. Like other wives of powerful, dying leaders—Mrs. Woodrow Wilson and Chiang Ching (Mao's wife) are probably the most familiar—she was determined to hold at bay the other contenders for succession. She had even boasted to U. S. Ambassador Sullivan that she would not make the mistake of Chiang Ching of failing to strike at the moment of her husband's death. She doubted her ability to keep Aquino out of the Presidency in a free election, and at least certain elements in the army and her own party had long wanted to liquidate the Senator (there was thus substance in her report of an assassination plot) on the grounds that he was consciously or unconsciously an instrument of the Communists. It seems likely that Imelda agreed with plans formulated by military elements that the problem of succession be resolved on Aquino's arrival. . . Senator Laurel trusted neither President Marcos nor Imelda—nor for that matter, his friend Ninoy, who was not only friend but rival—but he was deeply committed to the traditional political culture, which did not include assassinations of Presidential candidates, only their minions. Doy Laurel undoubtedly believed that he would be free to head

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

up the growing opposition while Ninoy remained in jail. The Laurels are no strangers to violence, but there seems little doubt that Doy was shocked into brief insensibility at the airport when he was informed of the murder by Butz Aquino, the Senator's brother. Nonetheless, the deed made Doy indisputably the leading Oppositionist. For his part, Butz Aquino seemed less surprised than outraged that Ninoy had been assassinated on the tarmac, and he saw himself as in a position, should the Opposition now unite around the image of the martyred Ninoy, as the natural heir to leadership.

Cory's Reaction to the Assassination

Cory has described to several reporters how she received the news of the assassination. It first reached her via the Japanese News Agency *Kyodo* in New York. Joaquin sets the scene:

"I couldn't sleep, I was waiting for his call. It was past midnight. Then Ballys our eldest came into my room and I asked why. 'Aie, Mom,' she said, 'I can't sleep either.' So we talked and then she asked what time it was. It was just then one o'clock. I went to the bathroom, then I decided to pray the rosary. Later, taking account of the 12-hour difference between Boston and Manila, I realized that it was then, between one-ten and one-fifteen, that he was shot. . .

After the call from *Kyodo* at 2:30 there were all sorts of rumors,—and finally, another call from Tokyo that brought chilling and convincing news of Ninoy's death. As Joaquin reports the message:

"Finally I got a call from Tokyo, from Congressman Ishihara, a very good friend of ours. He said: 'Cory, I'm very sorry but I think Ninoy is dead.' He had been told by a Japanese correspondent who was with Ninoy—Wakamiya, a freelance journalist—and Wakamiya said Ninoy had been shot in the head. Wakamiya had seen blood spurting from Ninoy's head."

Cory made immediate plans to leave for Manila, her departure much facilitated by Ernie Maceda, who managed to get the family's passports after a quick trip from Boston to the Philippine Consulate General in New York. The Massachusetts State Police then escorted Cory and the children to the airport. In Tokyo, Cory behaved as if she held the entire Philippine government responsible for her husband's death:

There was this Filipino who approached me and said he had been sent by the Embassy to assist me and I told him I didn't need any help. But he kept trailing us. We were with Ernie Maceda and Ninoy's doctor Rolly Solis and I told Ernie to ask that man to leave otherwise I might embarrass him and get Congressman Ishiwara to oust him from the room. The man finally left. Maybe I shouldn't have picked on him—but the idea of them suddenly wanting to help when they had been making things so difficult. . .

In Manila, she also gave Col. Karingal (who would some time later be assassinated) the same cold shoulder, and found that she had been justified in her suspicions.:

He said he has been sent to facilitate my entry: "Please give me your pass-

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

ports, so you won't have to line up." I said to him: "It's okay, we'll just line up like all the others." So we did; and then he asked me to give him our baggage tags so he could take care of our luggage. But I said we didn't need help. And he said he has transportation for us and I told him we'd just wait for my relatives. But he said: "Your relatives will be late because you have arrived ahead of schedule." I said: "Really? Anyway we'll just wait." And it turned out that my brother and sisters were already waiting outside. They had been there an hour and were being given the run-around . . . when we were leaving General Karingal said: "We have a car here, so we can escort you." He and his companions were in barong tagalog, not in uniforms, but I knew they were all from the military. And I said: "It's okay, I don't need escorts." I just wanted to get away from them all.

A year later, Cory could still not discuss seeing her husband's dead body for the first time, and turned from that anguish-filled subject to the rallies that soon pre-empted her time and thoughts:

[I was] delivering speeches before Rotary Clubs and in schools and so many other places. And trying to catch up on my correspondence. Then I went back to the United States in November for the memorial services in Harvard. I was away for three weeks and I gathered up the things we had left behind in the old house.

From Martyr's Widow to Opposition Leader⁴⁹

On her return to Manila, Cory had first of all to decide whether she would advocate a boycott or participation in the 1984 election. Taking her cue from Ninoy's decision to participate in the election of 1978 (which many of her later close associates—Salonga, Arroyo, Guingona and Pimental—insisted on boycotting), she found that she and Ninoy's brother Buz were seriously at odds. Buz was militantly for a boycott. To strengthen her resolution, Cory hoped for a message from Ninoy: "I hoped I would dream about Ninoy and that he would tell me in a dream whether this was the right thing to do or not. I admit there were times when I doubted having made the right decision, because the arguments for either side were equally convincing." Had the boycotters been successful, she told Joaquin, she might have fled abroad:

Maybe I would have had to go to another country—if I had been proved wrong. I have received so many letters, some praising me to high heaven, others condemning me and claiming that Ninoy would not have acted the way I did. But how would they have known Ninoy better than I did? Where were they when Ninoy was in jail for seven years and seven months? And all of a sudden they're claiming to know him better than I did.

The American Embassy, though it claimed that the decision to vote or boycott was one for Filipinos alone, strongly favored participation. Joker Arroyo, one of the boycott leaders, was outraged (*Mr. & Ms.*, 5/5/84):

⁴⁹ As recorded chiefly by the weekly *Mr. & Ms.*

NINOY AND CORY



The promising young journalist Benigno Aquino, Jr. weds a meek and wealthy Corazon Aquino.



The marriage united two of the most illustrious families of Tarlac province. The bride brought wealth; the groom a nationalistic heritage. Don Jose Cojuangco is at upper left, Doña Demetria Cojuangco lower left and Doña Aurora Aquino at lower right.



Ninoy, his mother's son, reported on the exploits and hardships of the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea (PEFTOK). In 1951, he received the Legion of Honor, the first Filipino newsman to receive the award.



(Above) Capt. Mariano Robles leads men of the 10th battalion combat team, PEFTOK, on a mission of clearing a guerilla-harassed section of the main allied supply route leading to Seoul. (Below) This is the last known photograph of Yultong Battle heroes, Capt. Conrado Yap and Lt. Jose Artiaga, Jr., (standing next to the Captain).



The Communists



There are two intertwined themes in the Ninoy-Cory story: (1) their consecutive pursuit of the Presidency of the Philippines and (2) the struggle of the Communists to seize the Philippines. Our picture shows Doña Aurora Quezon, the widow of Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippine Commonwealth, only weeks before she was murdered in 1949 with her daughter and eight others by Communist Huks while on their way to this very site. President Quirino stands to her left, Governor Santayana to her right. Carlos Quirino, Presidential aide, is on photo's extreme left.



William Pomeroy, American Communist, wears a hang-dog expression as he stares at money order sent to his sister-in-law, Ester Mariano, which Secretary of Defense Magsaysay holds in his hand.

The **Philippines Free Press** pictures five it identifies as the "Communist Big Guns" captured in 1950 (l to r): Amado Hernandez, Angel Baking, Alfredo Bautista, Jose Lava and Ramon Espiritu.



Ninoy's role in the capture of Huk **Supremo** Luis Taruc made him a national figure and Taruc's friend. Here he poses with Taruc, Montemayor and General Cabral.





(Left) Then-Col. Ito explains to President Marcos in 1966 the Huk situation in Central Luzon. **(Right)** Mayor Gallardo of Concepcion, Tarlac, later assassinated, discusses Huks before Governor Aquino and others.



Commander Sumulong, Huk leader in Tarlac (second from left), after his capture explains Communist tactics to Defense Secretary Enrile and President Marcos.

Ninoy the Politician



President Macapagal's Defense Secretary Macario Peralta, just before he despatched 2000 troops to Central Luzon to fight the Huks. Governor Aquino of Tarlac is at left, Col Maniego, 1st PC Zone Commander at right.



In 1963, Governors Aquino and Robles desert Nacionalistas and join Liberal Party. (l to r) Aquino, Robles, Representative Caliwara, President Macapagal, Speaker Villareal.



USAID picks Aquino as one of two Governors to head its SPREAD (provincial development) program. (l to r) Macapagal, U.S. Ambassador Blair, Aquino, Ernest Neal, Larry Henares, NEC Chief.



Governor Aquino drives Luz Magsaysay, the President's widow, through the streets of Concepcion, Tarlac in a 1966 celebration honoring the late President.



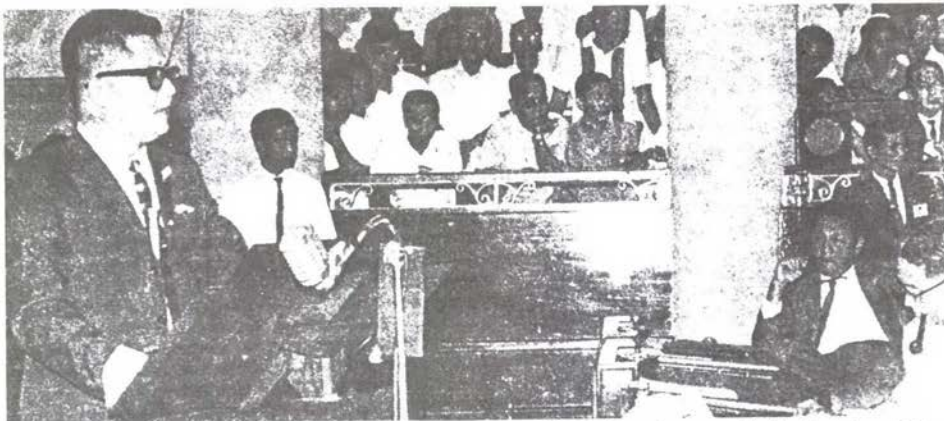
The only Ninoy-Cory picture known to the author which focuses on Cory rather than Ninoy and less than total agreement between the couple. The subject was family planning (in 1969). She was **pro**; he was **anti**.



Ninoy's birthday in 1967 was celebrated with Cory and the children.



Pictures taken during Ninoy's 1967 Senatorial campaign emphasized his youthful vigor. Here he leaps from his helicopter, equipment which only he and Senator Antonino could afford.



Senator Aquino delivers maiden speech in Senate attacking a "garrison state" of which he said he already saw evidence.



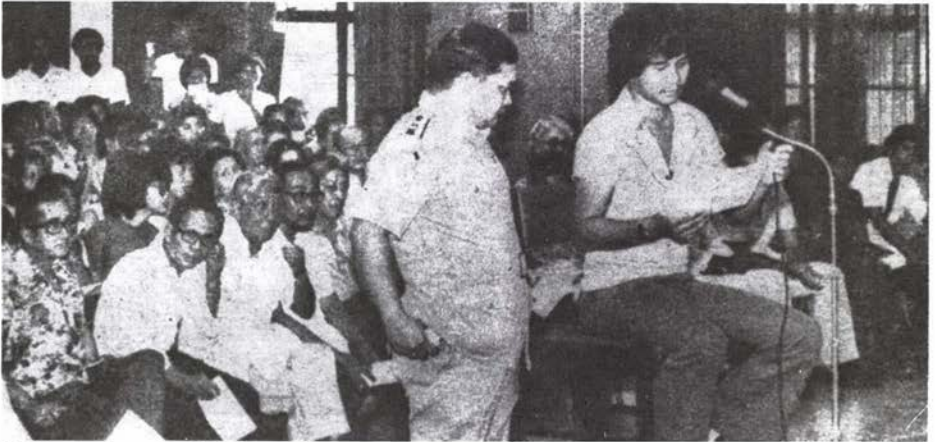
In August 1969, Senator Aquino visited Moscow and had his picture taken in front of Lenin's statue. It was front-paged in the Manila **Times**.



Ninoy's Court Martial



Aquino's 1973 court martial. Commander Melody testifies. Trial Counsel Sison at left. At defense panel's left are Defense attorney Capt. Tomas, Cory Aquino and Senator Aquino.



While Commander Melody testifies, Aquino sympathizers Rodrigo, Tañada, Roxas and others are visible in front row of spectators.



An imprisoned Ninoy eats with his family in 1978.

Cartoon: Ninoy in solitary

www.PhilippineAmericanHistory.com

Ninoy in Exile



Recuperating from his triple-bypass heart operation in Dallas (MB)



Interviewed by Washington **Star's** Sandra McElwaine on August 21, 1980.



Cory at former Alma Mater, Mt. St. Vincent.



Cory with Ninoy at Los Angeles symposium arranged by Ninoy Aquino Movement headed by Heherson Alvarez, at right.

The Assassination



The fatal return: Ninoy (in white) and Galman (with black trousers) lie dead as AVSECOM van arrives and is met by escorts with drawn guns. Stairway on which the descending Aquino was probably shot visible at left.



His sorrowing widow places flowers on Ninoy's grave.

Cory the Candidate



The at first reluctant Presidential candidate Cory Aquino campaigns vigorously in Igorot costume with Celia Laurel, wife of vice Presidential candidate.



The Filipino Feminist movement was an enthusiastic ally of Cory's. Here are Mary Concepcion Bautista, later a member of the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG), Haydee Yorac, U.P. Professor of Law, who told Cory "how to handle men", and feminist **Gabriela's** Fely Aquino with sympathizer Bobbit Sanchez.



Campaigning in the Southern Islands Cory flashes her symbol "L", for **Laban** (Fight) with both hands. (Left inset) NAMFREL volunteers guard the ballot boxes: a key precaution in Philippine elections. (Right inset) Makati sculpture represents Senator Aquino's death and transfiguration.



Successful electioneers Aquino and Laurel.



Successful mutineers Enrile and Ramos.

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

MABINI lawyer Joker Arroyo disputes Ambassador Armacost's claim that the U. S. does not advocate participation over boycott of the elections. On the evening of March 14, Joker says, he and five others prominently identified with the boycott movement met with Ulevich Strauss, U. S. state department country director for Philippine affairs, who was visiting at the time.

The meeting was arranged by Jim Nach of the U. S. embassy political affairs section. With Joker were: Abe Sarmiento and his son, Fr. Jose Dizon, Jojo Binay, and Jun Factoran. Joker says, "The whole theme of that meeting was participation. The Americans were asking why are we for boycott, what do we get out of boycott, and so on. They kept harping on this all evening. Towards the latter part of the evening, *napeste na kami*, we got fed up and we told the Americans, why do you keep pressuring us to participate? We are for boycott, and we won't change our minds."

Slowly but surely, and in spite of herself, Cory was meanwhile taking her first faltering steps as a politician. Still, she was far from assuming Ninoy's mantle. In the Opposition weekly *Mr. & Ms.* (5/25/84), she almost agonizingly pleaded with Neni Sta. Romana-Cruz: "Please do not overestimate me." Even so, the reporter emphasized that although Cory's stand on participation had been convincingly vindicated by the election (the Opposition won nearly 1/3 of the seats), she was as yet unwilling to accept leadership of the Opposition. The still sorrowing widow now bore "the added burden of knowing that her personal choice would influence countless other choices. From her experience, Cory is more convinced that it is best for her not to be a card-carrying member of any organization—then she can truly think and act independently."

Cory confessed that she was disappointed that Ninoy stubbornly refused to appear in her dreams: "he has to tell me what to do next!". . . Nonetheless, a clue to the New Woman Cory was in the process of becoming was visible just a year before she would become President, not only in Marcos'—but in Ninoy's—place, when she reacted sadly to becoming the subject of the usual political black propaganda:

She was tolerated and dismissed with much condescension as a woman who had a right to change her mind. . . She was even accused of being more a Cojuangco than an Aquino. The family business interests were invoked as what she wanted to protect with her insistence on participation. It was even whispered about, Cory relates, that the Americans had convinced her that the Hacienda Luisita sugar may be sold to the American market as part of the deal.

To all that Cory sighs, "If people won't accept my reasons, there is nothing else I can do, apart from being true to myself. One of the sad things about us is we have little faith in anyone."

The Cojuangco clan had in fact been badly divided over the boycott issue:

Another brother-in-law, businessman, art collector, and director of the BSA Foundation Baby Lopa, married to Cory's sister Terry, was an unwavering boycotter. Cory kids him, "I have really run out of favorite brothers-in-law." Still another one in the family, Popsy Mendez Aquino, Butz's wife, sent Cory a note just as soon as the results began to show the handwriting on the wall, "I am happy to eat my humble pie"—a gesture that Cory found parti-

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

cularly touching considering the volume of poison pen letters of late.

Still, Cory confessed that speech-making, though unavoidable, was an unwelcome chore:

The meat of her campaign speeches has been recollections of life with Ninoy, something people do not tire of, considering Ninoy's exclusion from media exposure for about a decade. "I usually end up saying that if he was willing to suffer and sacrifice his life, everyone has a corresponding duty too. But when I am through, sometimes people ask, "Was that a political speech? "

Though Ballsy protested that her mother couldn't tell a joke effectively, little by little she was learning to face the public and develop her own style:

Her ease at public speaking has emboldened her to go extemporaneous at certain portions, just like she did at the Pasay rally. She had seen how the city was plastered with *Kay Benitez Lahat* (All of us are for Benitez) signs. In an attempt at wit, Cory began her speech with, "*Ang swapang (crocodile) naman niya—gusto niya lahat ng Pasay.*" (. . . they want all of Pasay). A few conveyed their disappointment that someone with her finesse should use such a vulgar term. But to date, the unrelenting Cory has not found another word to approximate such "super greed."

As rumors spread that President Marcos would proclaim a snap election, Cory and her closest advisers, Jaime Ongpin and Senator Tañada, decided that some kind of "fast track" system (eliminating a convention) for the selection of an Opposition Presidential nominee would have to be devised, and established a so-called Convenor's Group consisting of a hatful of Presidential candidates. The signers of the agreement included Butz Aquino, Jose Diokno, Teopisto Guingona, Raul Manglapus, Ambrosio Padilla, Rafael Salas and Jovito Salonga. Two original members of the group, Eva Estrada Kalaw and Doy Laurel, had bolted on the grounds that the Convenors wanted an entire team of its own including both Presidential and vice Presidential candidates and that they were too heavily influenced by the Jesuits, who were behind the Convenor's Group.

In mid-January, Belinda Olivares-Cunanan clarified further the objections of Laurel and his UNIDO supporters to a bruited Cory candidacy:

Cory is the unknockable political leg which her embattled group stands on, and were she serious about political ambition she could give Doy Laurel tremendous trouble in the Opposition, as his leaders know only too well and openly acknowledge. If Cory were to run, Opposition stalwart Ramon Mitra, who was once Ninoy's cellmate in Fort Bonifacio, said last mid-December, "most of us who had been associated with Ninoy would close ranks and rally behind her."

But Cory, should she join the political fray as a serious contender for the presidency, a Laurel aide pointed out, "may cause the canonized memory of Ninoy to be damaged by the mudslinging that she will inevitably be subjected to." Moreover, the aide contended, while it is true that she is running as an Aquino, it is also true that she will lay open all the economic vulnerabilities of the Cojuangco family to which she belongs by birth.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *Mr. & Ms.*, (1/11/85)

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

But the inexorable process of diminishing Laurel and strengthening Cory support soon gathered momentum. In the end, it was by losing her temper that Cory, in Cunanan's words, "came into her own." As the reporter related the critically significant incident:

It was a solemn, unsmiling Cory Aquino who met the Convenor Group (CG) at her home on Wednesday, March 13, just three days after the successful National Unification Committee (NUC) conference in Pasig. She hadn't slept all night preparing for it and when her "tirade" as she call it, came, it was a continuous torrent of hurts for an hour or so, without notes, in a voice that . . . would be heard clearly in the next room.

Cory told the Convenor Group that she had felt manipulated when they refused to allow her to attend the NUC conference, that the group had become so inflexible, and that she hadn't bargained working for a group like that. "We seem to forget that it is Marcos who is our enemy, not one another," said Ninoy's widow.

The men's behavior had been so arrogant that it had inflamed a feminism which was new and vital to her new *persona*:

Cory also said she felt that when the men displayed such fear of her committing to something in the NUC convention, or making a blunder there, they apparently had not credited her with a mind and a judgment of her own . . . they had better start realizing now that with the length of time she had been interacting with the group, something was bound to stick in that mind of hers.

. . . Cory complained to the Opposition's Grand Old Man [Senator Tañada] that she wished she could be regarded no longer as just Ninoy's widow, but a personality of her own right. Ongpin, who had insisted at last Friday's meeting that Cory should transcend all political groups, told Cory that she should be more assertive and less coy about her role in the Opposition.

That morning Cory told the group in no uncertain terms that since nothing much had been achieved since the men had handled the unification effort, she felt that now it was time the women took the initiative. The men sat hushed and quiet, totally unprepared for Cory's tirade.⁵¹

After putting the men in their place, Cory said that she and another woman, 72 year old National Unification Committee Chairman Cecilia Palma, could do the job. In the reporter's words, "Cory Aquino has at last seemed to have come into her own and has wrested the initiative for leadership," adding for her own account an *obiter dictum* for which no concrete evidence whatever existed, but would be part of the growing legend of Cory's Ninoy inheritance: "Now at last she appears to be displaying that precious political wisdom that her late husband had always sensed in her. . ." The reporter went on to assess the New Woman: Cory not only had "grit, a steely character and inner strength," she also, the reporter claimed without a shred of evidence, showed "political savvy and acumen, as well as wisdom." Still, she had not yet learned that a political leader must be thoroughly partisan to be effective. Cory wanted to be "open to all

⁵¹ *Mr. & Ms.*, (3/22/85)

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

groups" and not co-opted by any. More realistically, however, she had told the cause-oriented groups that they had shown no ability to deliver votes, and that political parties were a key factor in elections.

The reporter and Cory then together elaborated on the New Woman and how she came to be:

Emerging from her political cocoon has not been easy for the painfully shy, reticent widow of one of the most dynamic political leaders this country has produced. As wife for 28 years to Benigno Aquino, Jr., Corazon Cojuangco Aquino has had to play an extremely recessive role, completely relegated to the background. "As far as politics was concerned, Ninoy was the master and I the novice," she declared in an interview published last November for Ninoy's 51st birthday. She would have been content to remain novice to a master she obviously adored. . .

But because she has a generous share of [keen personal instincts and natural intelligence], . . . and also because she is a deeply spiritual, prayerful person, Cory emerged in her new role with few bruises . . . she became a rallying figure and a symbol, the bearer of the Holy Grail. Her image as such constituted her strength, but also, as events were to prove, her liability, for in the eyes of many politicians, she remained merely a symbol. . .

The rest came when she got involved in the Convenor Group. . . "To many of these people, it was obvious that I was merely Ninoy's wife, who used to serve them coffee when they came around," says Cory musingly. "I was not to be regarded any other way but as such, even when circumstances in my life and I had already changed."

Their attitude contrasts greatly with that of people within the Convenor Group who had met and known her only after Ninoy had been killed, such as Convenor Jimmy Ongpin and facilitator Emmanuel Soriano. To these people Cory is the leader adored by the masses, . . .⁵²

When several Convenors (particularly Senator Salonga and Butz Aquino) had objected to her attendance at the NUC conference and described their objections, Cory, to her great shame, had burst into tears. She told her interviewer that "she had hated herself at that moment and wished that she 'could send back those tears where they came from.' The frightening thought occurred to her then that people might say she was resorting to a "typical feminine tactic." But at that critical point, she had the good luck to run into a militant feminist, UP law professor Haydee Yorac, "who gave her a pep talk on how to handle men and be more assertive in dealing with them." Even then, Cory resisted becoming a candidate herself: "Cory Aquino had consistently denied wanting to run for any office (despite the general consensus that the premier post in the land is hers for the asking, should she so decide), and from the pained look in her eyes as she executes this denial for the millionth time, one has no choice but to believe her."

In August, *Mr. & Ms.* published a straw vote which purported to show that

⁵² *Mr. & Ms.*, (3/22/85)

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

an all-widow team of Cory and Judy Roxas could poll over 9 million votes ("a win"). Cory's supporters allegedly numbered nearly 6 millions; Judy's 3-1/2 million. This was in the face of Olivares-Cunanan's flat statement that "Philippine politics is dominated by male chauvinists." Later in the same month, the same reporter estimated that "in case of a deadlock," Cory might be a "reluctant candidate." However, by the end of August, Cory dominated the Opposition. In the words of Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, the editor of *Mr. & Ms.*, Cory was no longer just Ninoy's widow, but "presidential." In a long and largely convincing article, Magsanoc wrote of Cory's interview on the most influential TV talk show, that of Rico Puno:

On camera Cory was no show-biz sparkler like ebullient youngest daughter Kris, 14, whom she described as the "female Ninoy." But Cory dazzled because she didn't seem to be on camera. She was for real. Kris, heeere comes Mommy.

... at the end of the show, Cory Aquino was no longer just Ninoy Aquino's widow. She's now Cory Aquino, her own woman, with her own sensible opinions most of which are simply common sense, ...

She was poised without being snobby; proper without being coy; spontaneous without being impulsive; natural without being anxious; one's everyday Filipino housewife without being dreary.

Asked if she thought Ninoy was a national hero, Cory replied she shouldn't be asked that question. "Ninoy has always been my hero. I'm very biased for him. It's up to the people to decide."

She invoked God and pious practices several times during the show without sounding sanctimonious. ...

Her very presence was inspirational without her going mawkish. She was well-informed without being a know-it-all (she said she had to look up Raffy Recto's "intercalation" in the dictionary). Articulate in English with flawless phrasing, Cory's diction would make proud her alma mater.

The reporter ended triumphantly, crowning Cory with the ultimate feminist compliment:

Hard to believe, that she, by choice only used to bring the coffee to Ninoy and his stream of visitors. Today, Ninoy might well be known as Cory Aquino's husband.⁵³

... This remarkably prescient interview held good, with one conspicuous exception—the then-absence of sanctimony and arrogance—for most of the next eighteen months.

A month later, speaking to the split Liberal party (Salonga/Kalaw) Jose Luis Santiago advised the party:

The Cory Aquino boomlet for president is a phenomenon that has not yet run its full course. Its dimensions and intensity could be deeper than what the hardnosed analysts estimate. It must be handled delicately and astutely. Many of the LP party loyalists believe that only Cory Aquino has the capability to

⁵³ *Mr. & Ms.*, (8/23/85)

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

beat Marcos and that prospect will certainly affect their attitude towards you.⁵⁴

In mid-October, the Cory bandwagon, though with Cory not yet actually on board, gained momentum. Francoise Joaquin wrote of the origin of the campaign for the million signatures:

It's been one surprise after another for Cory Aquino, with the recent glad news that she's become a grandmother for the first time, care of daughter Ballsy—and, soon, may be running for president. But at the launching of the Draft Cory Aquino for President Movement (CAPM), the one conspicuous absence was that of the lady herself. That Tuesday afternoon, October 15, the Bulwagang Plaridel of the National Press Club sported yellow banners stoutly declaring, "The Country Needs You Now," as ladies sold yellow caps reading "Cory for President."

The movement, a final result of coffeeshop musing between friends, strikes one as bordering between a political fan club and a group of avid campaigners, but one cannot doubt the member's sincerity. In the belief that Cory is the only person who can unite the splintered Opposition," the organization has taken upon itself the task of convincing her to run in the presidential elections, under the pressure of one million signatures that CAPM hopes to gather throughout the country.⁵⁵

One of the movement's backers, Tony Gatmaitan, expressed his views on Cory's qualifications for the Presidency: he "banked on her choosing people to help run the country under the tenure of morality and sincerity." Added Gatmaitan, after declaring that he would not be among her economic advisers, "We have to start with the confidence of the international banking community in the political leadership."

. . . As anticipated, the political neophyte made her political boo-boos when on the campaign trail, but they were curiously without serious effect on her popularity. People apparently wanted someone as little like the incumbent(s) in the Palace as possible. The real significance of her several *faux pas*, at that stage overlooked, was what they might portend for an Aquino Presidency.

Summing up the foul-ups, Macaraig, on the eve of the snap election, wrote:

Of course, failing to wear either make-up or nailpolish [a criticism of Imelda Marcos] does not count as cause for despair, except to sectors that believe that America does not properly appreciate "tall and beautiful" Filipino women. Nor can one control whom one's relatives happen to be, and whether they unfortunately included Billy Carter or Butz Aquino.

But, Macaraig insisted, certain boners, certain *faux pas*, need not have been committed:

instead of attacking dictatorship . . . and its 20-year-old record of human rights abuse and denial, foreign debt, poverty and inflation, cronyism and nepotism, the flight of capital, graft and corruption, an abusive and demo-

⁵⁴ *Mr. & Ms.*, (9/20/85)

⁵⁵ *Mr. & Ms.*, (10/18/85)

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

ralized military, and the assassination of her husband and its aftermath—the trial that never washed—Cory has bitten Marcos' bait, and spent the large amount of her campaign parrying blows against her reputation, her ideological leanings, and her intentions. . .

Furthermore, there have been statements that, candidly and unguardedly, have left the lady open to smug accusations by the ruling party that one cannot run a country on good intentions alone.

Quoting a Seth Mydans *New York Times* interview, Macaraig listed the most damning of her slips:

Aquino confessed she could remember only one or two issues over which she and Laurel had yet to reach agreement: "I forget now. I just remember the bases." Questioned about the NPA, she "first referred her questioners to a Jesuit priest." "I asked him one night to come here and brief me on Communism," she lamely explained "and how we go about fighting it and all that."⁵⁶

This interview (December 16, 1985) was actually a disaster which would haunt Cory for some time. Only feverish p. r. work on the part of the United States, which was preparing a massive intervention in her favor, could eventually obliterate it. Her admirer Raymond Bonner writes of the *gaffe's* effects on the public and not least on *NYT* executive editor A. M. Rusenthal:

"What on earth do I know about being President?" she admitted having told those who had urged her to run. "The only thing I can really offer the Filipino people is my sincerity." She told the *Times* that she did not have a specific program of government. That vagueness, that seeming lack of purpose and strength were bad enough for those American officials who had been supportive of her as an alternative to Marcos. But even more of a blow was what she said specifically. First, she said she favored removal of the bases. Then she was asked about the Communists and the NPA. Her first response was to refer to a Jesuit priest who worked in the slums and had briefed her. Then she added that the "majority" of those who supported the NPA were "not really Communists." She would, if elected, she explained, propose a cease-fire and a dialogue.

It's hard to imagine what Corazon Aquino could have said that would have sent more shudders through the White House. To the conservatives, her view of the Communists was simply naive, at best. It is a fundamental, unalternate tenet of conservative ideology that it is not possible to negotiate with Marxists. Period.⁵⁷

. . . To return to Macaraig, she was right that Cory had fumbled several issues, but wrong in suggesting that she had not in time turned to making Marcos and his sins the targets of her attacks. As Bonner documents it, in the last weeks, at the behest of American and British public relations experts, she spent her entire campaign lambasting Marcos, "the tyrant, the looter, the killer," and her audiences (and the voters) loved it. The election came and went, with its chicanery and its

⁵⁶ *Mr. & Ms.*, (1/31/86)

⁵⁷ *Waltzing with a Dictator* (New York, 1987), p. 392.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

disputed results, but after the world media crowned Cory President, Defense Minister Enrile and Chief of Staff Ramos mutinied, two to three million citizens took to the streets in defense of the mutineers, the armed forces refused to fire on their comrades or on the demonstrating civilians, and President Marcos fled the country.

The Candidate Wows the Media

Cory's transformation into a successful politician fascinated the international media. They were so bewitched that they oversimplified and frequently misinterpreted the change. Reuter's statement "If Cory has come out of a chrysalis in this election, it isn't as a butterfly in a yellow dress but as someone with a great deal more guts and nerve than you might have expected," cited by Crisostomo, typified the prevailing view of her emergence from obscurity. However, Crisostomo's own interpretation, with its flavor of mysticism, was far more insightful:

To the people she was Ninoy's replacement or substitute—some say his karma or resurrection . . . though death had eliminated her husband bodily from the climax of his epic struggle with Marcos, she had stepped into his shoes, as it were—she had taken his place bearing the magic of his name, the mystique and charisma of his persona.⁵⁸

Crisostomo errs seriously, this writer believes, in his introduction to this passage by claiming, as did many others, that Cory had absorbed much of Ninoy's political skills by osmosis. Still, he is surely accurate when he writes that the superstitious President Marcos, despite his putdowns of his opponent, realized the formidable candidature of the martyr's widow:

He knew his opponent was not Cory alone but Cory and Ninoy, and that concealed within that extremely feminine body of Cory was the distillation of the people's long pent-up passions, dreams, frustrations, suspended ambitions—and the surging tidal waves of sympathy and outrage generated by Ninoy's brutal assassination at the airport.⁵⁹

Crisostomo's chapters on the campaign are excellent, with reportage which is both accurate and dramatic. We summarize: after "Chino" Roces, at Cory's request, had led a successful campaign to collect a million signatures asking her to run, and she had been annointed as God's candidate by Cardinal Sin, Cory and vice Presidential candidate Doy Laurel opened their campaign in Batangas, the *macho* province long dominated by the Laurels, Doy swallowed the bitter

⁵⁸ *Cory: Profile of a President*, by Isabelo T. Crisostomo, p. 140. Lucy Komisar, in her biography, strengthens the hypothesis: "she had a recurring dream that she had visited a church and looked into a casket she thought had Ninoy's body but it was empty. She believed that Ninoy has been reborn in her." Ian Buruma, in the *New York Review of Books*, 6/11/87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

pill of playing number two to a woman, with largely reassuring results: "The people received them with great enthusiasm matched by curiosity, wondering perhaps what this frail, once sheltered wealthy widow had to offer to solve the nation's pressing problems which a man, President Marcos, had failed to resolve through two decades of rule."

From Batangas, the two challengers invaded enemy territory—Leyte, Imelda's domain. The *Associated Press* reported:

. . . more than 10,000 persons filled a public park named after Imelda Marcos' mother, Remedios Trinidad Romualdez, in Tacloban City, and thousands more heard her in five other rallies across the island 300 miles southeast of Manila. . .

In nearby Maasin town, where she later addressed a rally of about 7,000 people outside the catholic church, screaming crowds welcomed her, blocking the van she was riding in just to shake or touch her hands. . . in Matalon . . . she told a big crowd in Tagalog: "We are very happy to be here. I did not know that so many people love Doy and me in Imelda's country."

Teodoro Benigno, who would later become Cory's press chief, wrote that Marcos was discouraged, drawing crowds far inferior to Corys in both size and enthusiasm: "Analysts are quick to point out that the 'Cory crowds' pour out a spontaneous, jubilant and even 'reverential' flood causing Mrs. Aquino's supporters to claim 'the Cory tidal wave' would simply overwhelm the Marcos candidacy." A Marcos warning the Army might mutiny against a victory by a candidate believed to favor reconciliation with the Communists caused alarm, but reports from the RAM (Reform Army Movement) camp countered the charge by pledging to support Cory if she won.

The enthusiastic reception she was receiving in all her provincial forays gradually transformed Cory into an effective campaigner. No longer was she Ninoy's shadow; as Crisostomo had pointed out, in a sense she *was* Ninoy. Still, in another more exhilarating sense, as *Mr. & Ms.* had exultantly reported, she was a super-charged Cory, the New Woman:

Buoyed up by the people's eagerness and boundless enthusiasm, and more sure than ever before of what to say and how to say it to send them into spasms of joy and explosions of hope, Cory Aquino skillfully used sarcasm and humor to draw desired audience reactions. In Naga City she appealed to thousands of Bicolanos to take pity on Mr. Marcos who had said he was "already tired."

If popular enthusiasm was a tonic for Cory, the crowds also sent unmistakable signals to the politicians, who sensed that Marcos was losing the Mandate of Heaven. Fickle breed that they are, the politicians soon began to jump ship, deserting the KBL, the President's party. Not only the Bicolano leaders, but even one sector of the old Nacionalista party, led by one of Marcos' oldest and most loyal leaders, Jose Roy, now defected. In Cebu, traditionally a center of the Opposition, the Cory-Doy team was nearly swept away by crowds corraled by the reigning head of the Osmeña dynasty.

Cory's provincial ovations were unprecedented since the early appearances of

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Ramon Magsaysay, but it was her reception by the Manila business community, which the President had not only antagonized but threatened, that emblazoned the *mene tekel upharsin* on the walls of Intramuros for all to see. At the next door Manila Hotel's Fiesta Pavillion, Rotary greeted her with enthusiasm and high drama. Once again, we quote Crisostomo with appreciation:

When Cory made her appearance at 12:35 p.m., the leaders of the country's big business and industry danced and swayed until she reached the presidential table, eagle-eyed reporters noted that a bank chairman and president (Victor Barrios of PISO Bank) was detected with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Cory delivered a 45-minute speech; it was interrupted by 43 ovations, with the crowd not only clapping but roaring and screaming their hearts out as Cory delivered telling blows against President Marcos. During the ensuing open forum she received 12 additional rounds of applause. . .

Obviously, it was the men in the jumpacked hall that enjoyed her fighting speech most. For many of them, who knew Cory only as the soft-spoken widow of Ninoy with the sob story about him, the fighting candidate they heard was a revelation, and they loved it. One male fan even brought a whistle. Many men had tears in their eyes.

The most conspicuous of Cory's Rotary enthusiasts was Jaime Zobel de Ayala, the scion of the wealthiest family in the Philippines, "towering as he already is, . . . also standing on a chair and applauding wildly."⁶⁰

The "Snap" Election

It is unnecessary to recount the details of the election itself. T. V. transformed it into a morality play that stirred the hearts of millions. Reams of newspaper and magazine articles converted it into folk theatre comparable to American *ante bellum* audiences reacting to Eliza Crossing the Ice in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. So short are memories in the electronic age that few noted that the world enthusiasm evoked by Cory's campaign had a clear precedent in the Magsaysay campaign of 1953.⁶¹ Delirious crowds had hailed Magsaysay as the knight in

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 165

⁶¹ That portion of Cory's support while a Presidential candidate which was generated by her moral crusade also had a 1955 harbinger—Moral Rearmament, which in that year barnstormed through Asia harvesting the enthusiastic plaudits of a wide spectrum of Asian political leaders. Only the Communists and a hard-headed faction in the American State Department reacted negatively. In the Philippines, it was significant that the charismatic President Ramon Magsaysay, who had swept to victory in a similar crusade for honesty, purity and democracy, was by then encountering dissatisfaction and discontent. Such disappointment is in fact the history of moral crusades: they generate great fervor, but peter out as the idealism which produces the fervor encounters and is frustrated by a combination of objective obstacles and an inveterate cynicism. Its enthusiasts are prone to attribute its dissipating vigor exclusively to the latter, but it is pragmatic experience which acts as moral fervor's great decompressor. It is interesting, however, that while both President Magsaysay

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

shining armor who would slay the Philippine dragons of corruption and tyranny. What made the drama of St. Cory superior to that of Prince Magsaysay was that the dragon had been carefully locked up and chained in 1953; in 1985, it roared, spit fire and charged, yet was subdued by the gallant lady and her shining sword—all staged before the T. V. cameras.

The one great advantage that even an ailing and ageing dictator had over his opponent was political savvy, honed to a sharp edge. In the United States, Marcos had earlier shown himself a master in handling the press and T. V. At home, having himself invited the world media to witness the election, he failed miserably to impress its representatives. Having staged the show and assembled the audience, he permitted his opponent to steal all the principal scenes. Allow the author to quote himself on the election:

The election . . . brought a torrent of criticism from the international media and observer's groups, which, artfully guided, witnessed some of the KBL strong-arm tactics and then believed everything reported by church representatives and NAMFREL, and nothing related or claimed by either the KBL or the Palace. President Marcos nonetheless continued first to act as if he *would* win, and then as if *had* won. So long as his regime dominated the Philippine media, this was a position which he could not only assert but effectively convey to the country despite the chorus of denunciation from abroad. . . . the final results of the election were never known; the revolution buried the figures with the regime.⁶²

The world media, scenting blood, rushed in for the kill, and the President, rattled (by his sickness?) again miscalculated his moves when Minister of Defense Ponce Enrile and Chief of Staff Ramos mutinied. The President kept his most loyal armed manpower at the Palace, when the most critical citadels to be defended were the T. V. stations. When Marcos lost Channel 4, the government station, he lost the battle for world opinion. Then, when he (fortunately) failed to replace Generals who refused to fire on unarmed civilians with those who would, he was undone. His only viable option was to accept the U. S. offer to evacuate him and his family from his country.

Beyond Camera Range

In the election-turned-T. V. spectacular, both the skullduggery of the Marcos

and vice President Garcia endorsed Moral Rearmament, Ninoy Aquino, who always had his ear to the ground, was not heard from.

The Philippines in 1955 was obviously not yet ready for another moral crusade. The 1955 vehicle of the traveling MRA evangelists was a stage play, the *Vanishing Island*, by the British playwright and Buchmanite Peter Howard, which damned both the totalitarianism and cruelty of Russia and the immorality and materialism of the United States. Many of the same sentiments expressed so moralistically in *The Vanishing Island* appeared in Cory's speeches and those of her appointees to the Constitutional Convention.

⁶² *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, p. 252.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

forces and the heroics of the NAMFREL were recorded dramatically. What the T. V. cameras could not record was the quiet but dogged persistence of some of the newly-energized political activists. However, an article which appeared in the *American Foreign Service Journal*, the house organ of the professionals of the American Foreign Service, which was authored by the wife of a diplomat who visited her former hometown Cebu during the election, offered a glimpse of the desperation with which the Cory supporters faced, and sometimes faced down, their enemies. Thus, on February 4, three days before the election:

"You know, its funny," says the former TV newsmen, with well-honed intensity, . . . even the wealthy people are hurting. Even more in Negros: the sugar market is bad. But there is a phenomenon that has never happened before in politics here: the people themselves are spending for the election. Radio commentators are being invited to the various islands by plane, their fares paid by the people. . . The people ask them to come because they can dramatize, identify the dreams and hopes, articulate the opposition feeling. Never before. People go out into the streets to welcome candidates, waving anything yellow, even panties. In voting for Cory, they want change, honesty and integrity, everything Marcos is not and has not been. They are voting for the genuine Filipino soul."

A NAMFREL volunteer told of overcoming her fears in trying to assail the ramparts of the kingdom dominated by one of the Philippines most renowned *caciques*:

"I love my country," asserts a housewife, perhaps in her late 40s. "In 1984, I witnessed the incidents in Danao and vowed if I could do something I would do it." She is helping organize the NAMFREL expedition to pollwatch in Danao, the heartland of the area controlled by Ramon Durano, his sons, grandsons, and great grandsons and their private goons. "It is a little hard," she explains. "We talked with the parish priest there to see if he would organize a NAMFREL chapter. He said no. Then we talked with the nuns. At first they agreed. But their convent was stoned every night. The parish priest's house was stoned also by unidentified men."

Later, the reporter heard of U. S. Senator Lugar, who was trying unsuccessfully to view operations in Durano territory:

"We were toe-to-toe with the election registrar Loro for an hour," another member of the Danao support group says, her voice nearly gone from fatigue and tension. "The White House group was there but Loro wouldn't honor their passes. He said, 'I have no orders.'" "All right, call the Cebu provincial COMELEC registrar." "No," said Loro. Imagine, his name means parrot. So we went outside and grabbed the radio and called Cebu who told him he had to allow the foreign observers. So we started off to the precincts and Loro stopped and ran into his office. He must have radioed ahead because when we got to the precinct, the official there said he didn't have any orders to let us in. So we came back. We brought a refugee with us, the one man in Danao who tried to organize NAMFREL there."

Ninoy's Assassination and Cory's Transformation

The Revolution and the Media

In *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, the author rendered tribute to the courage, without neglecting to point out the luck, of the demonstrators who protected the perpetrators of the military mutiny that deposed President Marcos. Hence it is not meant as a sign of disrespect for what the participants proudly referred to as a "revolution made by People Power" to call attention to the role played by the U. S. media in that epiphany. Not that this role has been neglected by the media—far from it. Some media representatives have claimed the lion's share of the credit. Even so, subsequent reflection, strengthened not least by the celebrations held a year later, enlarge the media's role: they not only provided a world audience but were major participants in the events themselves. In fact, while witnessing the event, almost without being fully aware of what they were doing, the media *staged* the revolution for a world audience, transforming the unseating of an authoritarian President into a T. V. spectacular viewed by McLuhan's global village. If it had been presented by Max Reinhardt, choreographed by Nijinsky, with music composed by Joan Baez and produced by the Pope rather than a prince of the Church who had once been called *papabile*, it could hardly been more impressive. Certainly it turned out to be the greatest theatre spectacle of our time. . . This impression that the Revolution of February 1986 was not just a Revolution, but a T. V. spectacular, was strengthened by the sponsors' re-run of the Revolution a year later. The unusually thoughtful commentator Alfredo Navarro Salanga observed, in the course of criticism of an American folk music ensemble called upon to help celebrate the Philippine revolution:

Crassly commercial and even cynical that may be but that's showbiz for you. And what do we stand to "gain"? A free plug on prime time for what promises to be the most popular live telecast in America this week. Some kind of a free ride to remind all those good folks over there about the pretty little revolution they watched unfold last year, blow by blow every hour on the hour. Incidentally, we may not be as familiar with Japanese television but that's apparently what they're also aiming at with folk singers Tokiko Katoh and Kotaro Yamamoto and about five million dollars' worth of fireworks.

So chalk up another first as this is bound to be the first "revolution" ever to be packaged and sold beyond the seven o'clock news.

. . . Salanga's comments were of course satire, but the author is citing them as a springboard for the assertion that at least in the non-Communist world, there can no longer *be* a revolution which will not play before a world audience.

When a visiting writer headlined his retrospective story "How the press helped ~~dumped~~ a despot," he was boasting, but nonetheless unaware that he was *understating* the case. Even his own breath-taking statistics (850-1000 foreign press representatives, three major T. V. teams from CBS, NBC, ABC) and his lovingly-reported exaggerations of Marcos dastardy ("at least a dozen journalists murdered in 1985 alone," lies about the ownership of the Manila *Bulletin*,

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

exaggerations concerning the fabulous sums ladled out to pro-Marcos reporters) and even his descriptions of the wild indignation of first-timers in the Philippines at election vote-stealing and rough stuff—none of these made David Harvard Bain realize that the media, specifically the American media, and still more specifically, American T. V., were choreographing a morality play in which a repulsive dictator, brutally trying to steal yet another election was foiled by virtuous American writers like himself valorously supporting the spotless representatives of the Philippine masses in their courageous fight against continued oppression. (“Namfrel headquarters was the moral center of the Philippines.”) Bain was in the audience rather than a participant in the battle in its final stages, but his four-part series even so fell far short of realizing that the American media had in fact not only ousted a President but anointed, far more effectively than Cardinal Sin, his successor into office. They had not only anointed her; they had placed a halo on her head and blessed her followers by clothing them with undeserved virtues.

Let it be clearly understood, however, that the theatre, Reinhardt or not, with its hundreds of thousands of earnest and worthy, often brave, participants achieved the success which the script, probably written jointly by divine and profane fingers before it was delivered into the hands of the spectacle’s producer—let us call him God, which was designed to achieve. The ogre was gone, and Saint Cory stood triumphant, her indispensable military supporters, the mutineers Ponce Enrile and General Ramos, by her side.

In the critical weeks that followed, Cory showed that along with her miraculously rapid development into orator and campaigner, she had acquired the conviction that she was also God’s instrument. Encouraged by her coven of Catholic Socialist advisers and robed in sanctimony, she slowly reverted to inherited *hacendero* arrogance, shouldering aside her military collaborators who had made it all possible, and formed a government with their enemies on the Left. For the time being, most Filipinos apparently approved of government by pious precept and unction. As a brilliant visiting journalist in April 1987 was told by one cynical Filipino politician: “What this country longs for is a Marcos with a rosary.”

Chapter VII

A GOVERNMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS

Historically, Philippine democracy since 1907, as one perceptive observer has analyzed it, has been “an anarchy of warring families.” Thus society retained a basically feudal element. However, since nearly all the elite was intermarried, violence was usually limited to the lesser members of the families or their relatives. Professional politicians were the power brokers: family combinations supported Presidential candidates who repaid their support with government favors. Those lower in the socio-economic scale attached themselves to their blood or *compadrazco* relatives and served as lieutenants and soldiers or bosses and voters. The family and the Church—in that order—commanded loyalty. Democratic political institutions—an independent judiciary, political parties, voting by free choice on political issues—were weak or non-existent. Filipinos, as they boast, prefer personal relations to institutions or principles, though American influence established a verbal referential framework in which all the familiar slogans of American democracy are the coin, without its substance, of political debate: principles such as the rule of law and the concept of public office as a sacred trust are ritualistically repeated, but the behavioral norm is the *malakas* principle (muscle, not right). Public office is often a license to steal, and family and friends are valued far above principle. *Within* the family (and by extension in government), the father is an authoritarian who makes all the political decisions, but unusual in the Asian context, the wife not only has stature and respect, but more often than not, makes the economic decisions.^{62a}

The establishment of American sovereignty meant that American institutions and terminology were taken over almost bodily, but of course given Filipino content.⁶³ By 1899, municipal, by 1902 provincial, and in 1907 national elections were held, with both political parties and bitterly partisan press feverishly active. In the Assembly elected in 1907, after the representatives of the family clans in the Assembly chose Sergio Osmeña to represent them, he soon exercised authoritarian powers. In due course, Osmeña was replaced by Quezon, who in time totally dominated every element of the polity. Following independence, behind the facade of American democratic institutions, the family-backed coalitions that elected successive administrations quarreled chiefly over the fruits of power, with corruption choking successive governments to death despite the presence of many talented and a handful of incorruptible leaders. The principal leavening influence in a society based as the *malakas* principle was that the family clans were throughout the period sufficiently in balance to pre-

^{62a} See appendix B for another description of the Philippine political culture.

⁶³ The author has described this process in his *American Institutions in the Philippines, 1898-1941* (Manila, 1976).

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

vent the re-election of any President before Marcos, who achieved the feat in 1969 and then perpetuated himself in office by declaring martial law in 1972.⁶⁴

Cory's Democracy

The Aquino Cabinet formed in the days following the Revolution of February 1986 had minimal experience with government at the national level. Though vice President Laurel, National Resources Minister Ernesto Maceda, Minister of Public Highways Rogaciano Mercado, and ex-Senators Jovito Salonga and Ramon Mitra were seasoned politicians, the core figures of the government—Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, Minister of Local Government Aquilino Pimentel, Labor Secretary Augusto Sanchez and Presidential Spokesman Rene Saguisag were known Leftists and largely innocent of government experience. All were chiefly noted as human rights lawyers. Even ex-Senator Jovito Salonga, the head of the immensely powerful Philippine Commission on Good Government, was by 1985 best known as a civil rights lawyer. There is of course much to be said in favor of the moral courage of these individuals, and they were entitled to public recognition as well as the prize of office if they had qualifications for the appointment. Certainly if they were elected to the Senate, to which most of them aspired, there was no reason to believe that they could not serve meritoriously, even if dangerously wedded to the view that Communists are reliable associates in government. Of those appointed to the Cabinet, however, only Gonzales and Bengzon, Ministers of Justice and Health respectively, could be said to qualify by experience and talent as a Minister of the Department he headed. Ex-Senator Ramon Mitra, who was appointed to the critical post of Agriculture, had been a p. r. man and politician for most of his life and conducted his office like a snake oil salesman. Heherson Alvarez, in the politically sensitive post of Agrarian Reform Minister, had had no contact with farmers for years, and used his department exclusively to mount a demagogue's platform for land reform, cautiously avoiding references to content. He had spent his mature life in exile lobbying the U. S. Congress against the Marcos government. Pimentel was a small-bore, intensely partisan politician, Sanchez, as a labor lawyer and Leftist, was a representative of one of the traditionally least savory sectors of the bar, Concepcion a hardworking, decent do-gooder whose business career and NAMFREL experience hardly qualified him for the post of Cabinet Minister. Saguisag was a scrappy Leftist *tuta*, who like the Victor trademark, barked whenever his mistress, the President, seemed threatened. (Ross Terrill reported that Mrs. Mao, after her fall, defended herself by saying: "Whatever Mao said to bite, I bit.")

. . . Beyond all other individual considerations, human rights lawyers were intrinsically anti-government in philosophy. Their training and preferences were ill-suited to promoting constructive government policies and objectives, and they

⁶⁴ See the author's *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture* (Manila, 1987), which records political history from 1935 to 1986.

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

were instinctively sympathetic to demonstrators, rioters, and strikers—often even criminals—whose actions were anti-government in spirit or in content.

All of the Leftists performed poorly. Salonga and Guingona, whose obsessional preoccupation it was to liquidate the U. S. bases, had, respectively, good and acceptable reputations, and Salonga was said to be unique among politicians in never having stolen from the public coffers. Still, he had used his allowances as Congressman to build a political machine, and he withdrew as head of the Philippine Commission for Good Government after he had milked it dry for publicity, demagogically claiming that his efforts would bring back Marcos' stolen billions from Switzerland. Other than accepting offers by cronies to make restitution, Salonga recovered little of what had been stolen from the government by Marcos and his cronies, and refused to bring a case against one of them because he was one of his *compadres*. As a specialist in international law, Salonga knew that the alleged billions could not be recovered without the accused's appearance for trial in the Philippines, which the government dared not permit. For his part, Teopisto Guingona was a one-issue Leftist demagogue—get rid of the U. S. bases and make friends with the USSR.

President Aquino's negotiator with the minorities, Butz Aquino, of course, was hardly a Leftist, but rather a rabble-rouser like his martyred brother. He made crippling concessions to the rebels in both the Cordilleras in the north and the Muslim areas in the south in his efforts to become Ninoy's heir apparent. Cory complained privately of his depredations, but after Ninoy's assassination, Butz was a cross which she had to bear. As her chief representative in negotiations with the NDF, President Aquino selected the Leftist Mitra, a newspaper buddy of Ocampo and Zumel, who was also ready to give away the store, but only in installments. He was saved by NDF arrogance and the extremity of their demands, which served as an excuse for him to abandon his assignment. Such were the principal figures in Cory's first Cabinet and the first Congress.

Meanwhile, at the Palace, the Leftist fort was held by Arroyo, Teodoro Benigno (who a decade or so earlier, had preferred a red card to a green), and Teodoro Locsin, Jr., who wrote a Communist Manifesto of his own in 1971:

. . . any movement for social reform that relies in any significant degree on the propertied class for support will destroy its program. The victory of such a movement will mean only a change of masters, and a new vocabulary will mask the same old exploitation of the common man.

Only the proletariat is capable of effecting a radical change, a permanent improvement . . . as the proletarian he has his comrades, with whom he shares material poverty and spiritual alienation. He alone is, therefore, capable of creating a new society free from contradictions and held together by the virile fraternity such as is forged in battle and not by the constricting web of greed.⁶⁵

Just prior to the plebiscite of February 1987, Arroyo spelled out the basic

⁶⁵ *Philippines Free Press*, 8/28/71

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

philosophy of the Aquino government. In the first place, he said, Cory ordered the release of all political detainees, held under the Marcos administration on the simple proposition that anyone who opposed Marcos on political, economic, social, ideological, or personal grounds had committed no crime.

In other words, whether opposition was based on subversive intent or a devotion to democratic government was irrelevant. Arroyo was being sly: this was not a simple, but a simplistic, proposition behind which subversive elements could be set free to agitate for a Leftist government. Coming from Arroyo, this caused no surprise. As he told his sympathizer Sheila Coronel (*Sunday Times*, 3/9/86), in an article which pictures him giving their salute, he was unapologetically sympathetic to the Communists:

"I feel very strongly about them," he says. "There are some concepts of their ideology that I agree with, although I do not concern myself with their ideology. Over the years, I understood and empathized with them. I may not be part of them but I just thought there is a lot to learn from them. And well, these people had to be defended."

The release of the political prisoners, Communists as well as non-Communists, was the key policy, as it had been the pledge, of the Aquino government. The appointment of human rights lawyers to Cabinet posts irrespective of qualifications for their positions, was the second, with the result that most of the Cabinet posts were incompetently administered and occasionally infiltrated by Communists, or more frequently, their sympathizers. Benigno's past hardly bore scrutiny, and Arroyo brought a whole covey of Leftists (Sarmiento, Binay, Factoran, *et. al.*) into government. When Executive Secretary Arroyo proved unwilling or unable to process papers, the government often stood still, and when foreign investment, which President Aquino said she needed desperately, was intimidated by militant labor demands that Sanchez had encouraged, Minister of Trade Concepcion berated businessmen for their lack of patriotism or timidity. Here a meaningful reminder is necessary. Arroyo may be a sincere believer in democracy whatever his Leftist political sympathies, but as Whittaker Chambers has reminded us, it is the *power to influence decisions* that is and remains the major objective of the Communists: "power to influence policy had always been the ultimate purpose of the Communist Party's infiltration."⁶⁶

Gatmaitan's Assessment of the Political Spectrum

The often acute observer Tony Gatmaitan, in the May 30 *Mr. & Ms.*, also analyzed the political complexion of the new regime. His observations should be compared with the author's. Approvingly quoting a study made by the "Advocates for New Leadership" (ANL), a think tank whose most prominent earlier recommendation had been that Cory fight the campaign "as a crusade rather

⁶⁶ *Witness* (New York, 1952), p. 427

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

than a conventional campaign." (This was a less than original suggestion; it had won for Magsaysay and Macapagal, but given the surprising charisma which Cory developed as the campaign wore on, the recommendation proved to be a ten-strike). The ANL rated 28 members of the new dispensation across a political spectrum from Left to Right as follows:

Left of Center outward – 13

Group A – President Corazon Aquino, Joker Arroyo, Alran Bengzon, Rogaciano Mercado, Solita Monsod, Lourdes Quisumbing

Group B – Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Teodoro Locsin, Jr., Jaime Ongpin

Group C – Heherson Alvarez, Jovito Salonga, Mita Pardo de Tavera, Ramon Mitra, Jr.

Group D – Jose Diokno, Rene Saguisag, Augusto Sanchez

Center – 5

Group O – Neptali Gonzales, Sedfrey Ordoñez, Alberto Romulo, Luis Villafuerte

Right of Center outward – 10

Group I – Vice President Salvador Laurel, Jose Concepcion, Jr., Antonio Cuenco, Jose Antonio Gonzales, Ernesto Maceda

Group II – Jose B. Fernandez, Jr.

Group III – Juan Ponce Enrile, Fidel Ramos

Given the almost certain Leftist complexion of the ANL, this rating seems persuasive, if not wholly convincing, in locating the persons *inter se*. except that Arroyo and Mitra should be placed much farther to the Left. Incidentally, rated along another axis, the pro- and anti-American spectrum, there would be an almost identical line-up, with Leftists making up a majority, anti-Americans wing and the so-called Rightists the minority, U. S. – friendly group. There were probably no more than five who were friendly to the Americans: Laurel, Enrile, Ramos, Ongpin, Fernandez, and Concepcion.

Vice President Laurel, who in the early days had been touted as a kind of Prime Minister, was soon reduced to a figurehead even as Foreign Minister in the Department of which he was nominally in charge, making it plain that his UNIDO party, without which Mrs. Aquino could not have won the election, was in her view unneeded and unwanted. This was undoubtedly a jolt, if not a surprise, to Laurel who told one observer immediately following the Revolution that Cory had said to him: "Oh, you are going to run the government anyway. I just want to topple Marcos. You will be prime minister. . .⁶⁷ When the armed forces of the Philippines, whose mutiny against President Marcos had made it possible for Cory to claim the Presidency, grew restless and critical of her determination to yield to Communist pressures and to tolerate NPA ambushes without approving AFP retaliation, and Defense Minister Enrile then urged that such policies be rectified, President Aquino, in what was her first decisive action,

⁶⁷ *The Turning Point*, by Marilies von Breven (Manila, 1986), p. 14. At first, Mrs. Aquino denied she had made this statement, but later explained that the demonstration of People Power that had driven Marcos into exile cancelled her pledge to Laurel.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

fired him, harvesting plaudits from the Leftist media at home and abroad.⁶⁸ The increased hostility of the soldiers and their officers toward this policy of submission to Communist demands and government support for prosecution for the human rights abuses of the military but not of the NPA was unfairly and inaccurately stigmatized as hostility toward civil government in general.

A cease-fire cleverly exploited for psy-war purposes by the Communists, checkmated the military, while the NPA liquidated its enemies and non-cooperators and imposed "taxes" and executions in the countryside. Nothing could disabuse the President of her conviction that her only real enemies were the "Marcos loyalists" and her anti-Communist military. In her reckless naivete, she firmly believed that less than 20% of the Communists were hard-core, that the rest had been driven to revolt by the Marcos policies. The Muslim rebellion, which had been in progress for centuries, she, like Arroyo, apparently also simplistically and unhistorically attributed to the Marcos policies. Butz Aquino, Ninoy's younger brother, strangely sought peace in Mindanao by building up Nur Misuari, on the record the most recalcitrant of the Muslim leaders.

After eleven months in power, the government's weaknesses were portrayed by Arroyo as strength: "She could do a Marcos if she wanted," but because of her devotion to democracy, she virtuously restrained herself:

. . . she laid down the policy that her lawmaking power must be used sparingly. She would use it to dismantle the structures of dictatorship and to pass such measures . . . absolutely necessary to tide us over the transition to full democracy with a Congress. And so she used her power to repeal repressive decrees, break up monopolies, investigate hidden wealth, and to pass measures that couldn't wait for the new Congress, such as a budget for 1987 and revenue laws to help fund it.

She had laid down this policy of niggardly legislation because she believes that power is addictive, the more so when it is absolute. And the appetite to use it grows with eating, as what happened with Mrs. Marcos.⁶⁹

Arroyo was again being sly. Power is addictive, but for no one is it so essential as for the Communists, and to claim credit for weak government policies that offer opportunities for the subversives is meretricious. At least one of the Marcos principles was unexceptionable: the first necessity of a government is to govern.

In the opinion of the author, both Harvard, with its frequently McGovernite versions of democracy, and the Ateneo, with its preferences for a Catholic socialism, were bad influences on Cory's government and on a government style appropriate for both herself and the Philippines. Cory's great assets were sincerity and personal integrity; her great weakness was government inexperience. A decision on her part to reign and not rule would have maximized her strengths

⁶⁸ Whether the U. S. government recommended or was consulted on this move is unknown, but its *post facto* approval was clearly indicated.

⁶⁹ Manila Bulletin, Jan. 25, 1987

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

and minimized her weaknesses. The country was ready for a Queen, wielding the moral authority necessary to stake out basic new directions for the polity, if she should select a Prime Minister to run a government giving effect to the guidelines she would establish.⁷⁰ The appointment of someone like Rafael Salas to the post of Prime Minister or Executive Secretary heading up a Cabinet of experienced technocrats would have immediately been followed by a flow of private capital first from abroad and then domestically which would quickly reduce the debt burden, while the ministries of government, staffed by persons competent to discharge their duties would bring further investments, with their favorable effects on both income and employment.⁷¹ Suspicious that such a disposition of functions would deprive Cory of her rightful powers as an elected President are inaccurate. On the contrary, Cory diminished her influence over government by selecting political ideologues incompetent to discharge their obligations as Cabinet Ministers.

Seven Months of the Cassandra Commentaries

Shortly after Ambassador Stephen Bosworth arrived in May of 1984, the author began, on his own initiative, to send the Ambassador brief observations on developments under the Aquino government. Since it soon became evident that their composer was a minority of one in questioning the wisdom of unqualified American approval of what was going on, they amounted to what, with very little poetic license, could be called Cassandra commentaries. The following are excerpts from the last seven months of those classified memoranda, at which time despair at the follies and errors of both the American and Philippine governments caused the writer to break off his notes in favor of a book, with a conservative political orientation, which might reach a wider audience. (Please recall that the writer was at that time a retired Foreign Service Officer with no official status and no access to classified material).

4/24/86

1. Cory looks more like Kerensky every day. The first priority of a government is to govern, and tolerating that crowd of jeering Marcos loyalists-for-pay outside the Embassy injures the Embassy far less than it does the reputation of her government. The same goes for encouraging squatters, strikers, criminals and the NPA. Sweet reasonableness has its place, but she is encouraging both of her two most dangerous enemies—the NPA and the Marcosites. I

⁷⁰ It could be argued that in fact, Cory had opted for the status of Queen with Arroyo as her Rasputin.

⁷¹ One well-informed member of her government alleged that after a bruising battle with Joker and his coven, Cory had finally offered Salas a post to be assumed in April 1987. By then, he was dead.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

can't imagine that the AFP is pleased by her finding reasons for excusing the killers of AFP personnel.

If, as reported in the press, the U. S. officially advised Cory against a proclamation of a revolutionary government, I think it was wrong. It encouraged the irresolution shown by her government. For that matter, I question whether the word "revolutionary" frightens the U. S. Congress. Nowadays, it's a very *in* word.

2. The Sandinista Liberals are as busy as the NPA, making heroes out of Filipino Communists. It is sickening that there is not a single newspaper with a militant conservative message when we have a government of the Left in office, even if Marcos gave the Conservatives a bad name.
3. Another absurd appointment: Heherson Alvarez, a darling of the American Left, is to become Minister of Agrarian Reform. I doubt if he can tell the difference between a rice paddy and a corn field. Mitra was a bad choice; Alvarez' appointment compounds Cory's crimes against the farmers.
4. I think the historical record abundantly shows that constitution-writing, however beloved of the Filipino *ilustrados*, is an exercise in futility. It encourages a national tendency to focus on words, rhetoric and legalisms rather than on substance and acts.
5. The U. S., I gather, eventually came to believe that *anyone* would be better than Marcos. God knows that it was past time for him to go, but it is *not* true that anyone else was bound to be better. We bear a weighty responsibility for helping to put Cory in office. So far, she's shown nothing Presidential. She's a convent product given a graduate polish in U. S. Leftist doctrines. Descriptions of her Cabinet meetings made them sound like a high school debating society. The only men in her Cabinet are women, plus one man who was once wickedly called "so young and so corrupt" (Maceda, when Manila Councilor, by Mayor Lacson).
6. I am less concerned about Cory's lack of a broad economic program than the economists and bankers. The underground economy still has a good head of steam; the highway between Los Baños and Manila in the early morning is full of trucks, and remittances from overseas are heavy.

5/17/86

1. Operation *Tar and Feathers* has been a spectacular success. As the shrewd observer Fred Barnes approvingly put it in the April *American Spectator*, "Friend or foe, Marcos had to go." His colleague, Tom Bethell, the only journalist to my Right, gives credit where credit is due: "A member of one of the observer teams told me the CIA was involved in anti-Marcos activity, and with NAMFREL, the volunteer watchdog organization that steered U. S. observers to just those precincts where voter fraud was most likely to occur, and with "We Belong. . ." Gleeck: Gualberto Lumauig gave away the basic outlines of the script in the *Bulletin* (1/30/86), including the prediction that

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

"the quick count of the . . . U. S.-back Namfrel . . . will furnish 'advance counts' on Election Day that, extrapolated, would indicate an Aquino victory."

2. The U. S. government's parallel operation, *Joan of Arc*, has been a resounding flop. Barnes: "Aquino is no peach. She has been more foolishly sanguine about Communists than anyone since Jimmy Carter." Bethell: "it is not democracy that the Left is interested in. It is revolution and vengeance that they crave. (Vengeance usually goes by the name of "revolutionary justice.")" Gleck: "The Civil Liberties Union is not an organization to be entrusted with the responsibilities of national government, nor Amnesty International with its oversight."

6/1/86

1. Hurrah! at last, two excellent appointments by President Aquino: Ike Joaquin at Immigration and Alex Melchor to be Ambassador to the USSR (if confirmed). Both are excellent choices, and if Alex goes to Moscow, the Philippines will be well represented in both Washington and Moscow.
2. The Filipinos have been clever in suggesting base rentals to equal the estimated cost of a transfer to other sites. It has a superficially equitable sound. It is of course their asking price, and they'll accept much less. If we bargain too hard, however, the base unions are a wild card. The Filipino employees can cripple the bases and even if the bar girls break up another picket line, the Avgas pipe lines are vulnerable.

6/2/86

1. It now seems clear that we have not only a government of the Left, but a government of Jesuits. It will be interesting to see if they are able to make Philippine government more honest, as well as more respectful of civil rights. I am not sanguine; after all, they've been around quite a while (though not hitherto in Malacañang).

7/7/86

1. I sympathize with Mike Armacost. He successfully deposed the despot Marcos, but got in his place a convent school girl whose only governmental skill, a dubious asset, is an ability to speak French. As a result of her three years at Harvard, she has a Sandinista philosophy and heads a non-government of squabbling Leftist second-raters. The only Filipinos with both strategic and tactical plans are the Communists, who are making substantial progress in both the military and political spheres. If they had chosen her themselves, the Communists could hardly have a greater friend than Cory. The NPA regularly ambushes the AFP, and she greets their attacks by a lecture to the

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

AFP on not being nasty to brother Filipinos! Meanwhile, she has selected Mitra and Diokno, both National Democratic Fronters, as her representatives to discuss a ceasefire with the Communists. Hail hail, the gang's all here!

The Philippines is another post-Somoza Nicaragua and post-Batista Cuba. Somoza (Batista), has been forced out; the U. S. is bringing gifts to the "democratic forces" led by Cory and Joma Sison. Like Ortega and Castro, it will take a while before Cory bites the hand that feeds her, but she is anti-Reagan and a creature at least as such of the American as the Philippine Left. We have been so outraged by Ninoy's almost surgical murder that we have forgotten the brutal slaughter, in April 1949, of the saintly Doña Aurora, Quezon's widow, their daughter, and eight others by Huks. Cory will go to the same way if she doesn't wake up.

Apart from her wildly optimistic view of the Communists, Cory doesn't recognize that the first requirement of a government is to govern. The Constitutional Convention is an academic seminar that distracts attention from, and delays, the real business of governing. The 1935 Constitution would have served; a few amendments promulgated by the revolution's President would have sufficed to get the economy on the move while the NPA, the overwhelmingly most important threat, was dealt with. . . What are we going to do when the Left finally persuades Cory to fire Enrile? Suck our thumbs?

2. I do not believe I underestimate the U. S. problem. Cory is still very popular, and intends to do nothing to diminish that popularity. Little Miss Muffet is not frightened by the spider beside her, and our principles deter us from trying to persuade her to reach for the Flit. Can we appeal to Cardinal Sin? Everyone thinks he has grown in stature; I think he is a grandstander. He used the church to get Marcos out, but he won't use it to oppose the Communists. . . Appeal to the Jesuits, who have a reputation for appreciating power and going for the jugular? It's all right with me; before 1898, the Philippines was a theocracy, and it might work again.
3. We should urge the DOD, despite its objections, to begin serious planning to transfer the bases out of the Philippines (I say serious because the Filipinos believe that we'll never do it voluntarily). Why the U. S. professes to be so optimistic is beyond me. Sure, we could win, probably decisively, a plebiscite on the bases, but they are hostages to the government and unions. Even apart from their vulnerability to sabotage, without a government that positively values the bases, and will restrain the unions from making unacceptable claims, the bases could soon be made un-operational.
4. I assume the Embassy will hear from Singapore what Lee Kuan Yew told Cory—apart from his welcome views on the bases. His advice on how to deal with the Communists would be helpful, but she wouldn't ask him, and perhaps he didn't volunteer.

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

7/14/86

1. Enrile, along with Cory's strange popularity, are the only forces for stability. He is still the number one target of the subversives in the field, the colleges and the media. Still, he too could do better. The Manila Hotel fiasco offers additional grounds for court martialing Col. Abadilla, allegedly the past regime's chief torturer. . .
2. Tolentino's past record has been one of the best among the politicians, but at the Manila Hotel *putsch*, he has ended up a clown playing street theatre. He knows his constitutional law, he has a case, but of all people, he should know what folly it was to unchain the Manila *Lumpenproletariat*—just as at Malacañang on February 25, they were bound to loot and vandalize, whether in the name of Aquino or Marcos or someone else.
3. The most dangerous man in the Cabinet is probably not even a subversive. Pimentel, just another cheap politician trying to build a machine, accepts anyone who signs up and uses them to replace elected local officials. Those in office may indeed be grafters, but a *Laban* affiliation is no sign they are any better.^{71a} If Johnny Frivaldo, a Marcos foe who has paid his dues, says the OICs appointed in Sorsogon are criminals, we'd better listen. That is an area where the NPAs could seize any of several towns and hold them for days. Maybe Gillego is waiting to be named C-in-C of the Bicol NPA before returning there to lead the march to Manila a la Cambodia.
4. I wish I would understand why we are so anxious to have Cory visit the U. S. If the Reagan administration thinks it will win votes by cuddling Little Miss Muffet, their plans may misfire. She wants U. S. money and blessing, but she's the darling of Senators Kennedy and Cranston, the *NYT* and the *Washington Post*, and she looks for *real* support only from a Democratic administration. Her schoolgirl reassurances are not apt to beguile American investors, and I'll lay two to one that the Kremlin will top any White House offer—after all, she's supporting the first stage of *their* program for the Philippines. (The Kerensky stage).
5. Who is left, if Cory bombs? Enrile has the ability and the moxie, but lacks majority support. Ople, ditto, plus a foot in the Soviet camp. Laurel's following is also a minority. Still, together, they might make a strong team—until they fell apart—and there are a few salvageable elements in the Cabinet and

^{71a}Pimentel, from the Palace viewpoint, was an invaluable Cabinet counterweight to a rambunctious Enrile. As Komisar, *Op. cit.*, p. 145, wrote:

"Nene [Pimentel] has been valuable, because he's the only one who stands up to him." Locsin and Arroyo advised her, "In this period in your presidency, you're facing a challenge from Enrile. What you are looking for is not brains, but guts, because it's going to come down to a fight. Value people like Pimentel. You can put a lot of smart people around you, but at the first whiff of a coup, they're all in Hong Kong or New York."

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

sub-Cabinet. Maceda, though his past record is said to be full of corruption, has brain, energy and experience. He'd certainly be an improvement over the Joker, and there's greater opportunity to steal in his present job than as Executive Secretary.

7/28/86

1. Huffing and puffing, we know from our nursery rhymes, can blow a house down. Can huffing and puffing by the U. S. hold Cory's house *up*? I'm afraid Cory thinks so, misled perhaps by the almost equal criticisms she receives from Left and Right: "I must be holding the correct course if I'm hit from both sides." Wrong, or certainly right only if the course charted leads to the Promised Land. Cory's encounter with the businessmen was a disaster—not because she spoke approvingly of labor militancy—though it didn't help her with her audience,—but because she offered them nothing. Homilies on good citizenship won't do it. Could someone perhaps persuade her to use the word "profits" without curling her lip? I do not believe that Cory wants socialism; she speaks favorably of private enterprise, but she's trying to square the circle, visualizing a capitalism that even the Scandinavians have not tried. Alfonsin's recommendation that debts be paid out of growth is fine, but without profits, where's the growth coming from? Cory may be counting too heavily on her popularity and sacrificing too much to hang on to it. If you make hard choices, you are bound to lose some support.
2. Stalled negotiations with the NPA are probably far better than actual negotiations. To the Communists, negotiations are simply another form of war. They turn to negotiations when they promise something harder to acquire by fighting. But I'm afraid the government doesn't want, in fact refuses, to understand this. They think negotiations will lead to a satisfactory compromise, while the only satisfactory negotiation from the Communist viewpoint is one that improves their position. I can't understand why the NPA is stalling; the moment they sit down to talk, the pressure will be on the *government*, not them, to make concessions (Just like the US-USSR nuclear disarmament talks).
3. I hope our contingency planning includes thinking of Paeng Salas as a possible caretaker President. I assume we have people in close touch with him. My guess is that he is the only exile who could come back to take over important government responsibilities. Too bad about Manglapus, but I fear he's simply a Catholic socialist who would go to bed with the NDF.

8/14/86

1. Saguisag has gravely damaged Cory's government, repudiating her own repudiation of her statement made before the election that she would welcome NDF representatives into her government. His hair-splitting distinction

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

between Cabinet member status and less elevated authority only adds deviousness to what could be interpreted as dishonesty. I shudder at President Reagan's reaction: he has been persuaded, perhaps bullied, into extending several hundred millions in *cash* (!) to Little Miss Muffet's government, and now it turns out that she has knowingly accepted Communist associates.

If the US visit is to be salvaged, I think damage control measures are essential—at least she should fire some of those identified as ultra-Leftists. We should make it clear to her that while we can go along, however skeptically, with her ceasefire negotiations with the NPA, the Saguisag admission actually endangers the prospects of the visit. (I think it also threatens the survival of her government).

2. I suppose that as usual I speak from ignorance, but why shouldn't there be the basis of a good deal between Cory, Marcos and Spain? If Marcos really has three billion dollars looted from the Philippines, he could offer the Philippines a billion for withdrawing its objections to his residing in Spain, one billion to Spain for investment there, and still retain a billion for pocket money. The deal would be just like a compromise tax settlement. There is a perfect precedent: Spain gave Peron refuge; it would probably be delighted to have Marcos and his billion if it was not considered an unfriendly act by the Philippine government, and the PCGG would have harvested a billion without the lawyers taking their usual monstrous share. The United States would have fulfilled its commitment to Marcos and now be spared a sometimes embarrassing presence. Good deal all around, even if the figures need be scaled down. I've never believed the 3 billion figure. If you steal in the Philippines, your net is probably about 35-40% of your gross.
3. Up to now Pimentel has just been a nuisance; his proposal to put the Constabulary under the MLG is a naked grab of power and a prelude to civil war. However, it makes perfect sense to those who want a real revolution, non-Communists as well as Communists.
4. This Alvarez is more visibly a fool every time he opens his mouth. He knows nothing about land reform or the experiences with Philippine land reform to date or the relation of his ideas to agriculture. (Here I speak from six years' experience with the program). Land reform is too important, both symbolically and practically, to be left in the hands of a such an ideologue.
5. A prediction: Cory's *parientes*, like those of all her predecessors, will eventually drag her down. Butz is only the most visible. The heritage of his forays into Mindanao and the Cordillera suggest he should be sent to the showers before he does any more damage.
6. If you wonder what I mean by my frequent references to acting (or not acting) "Presidential"—in my view a very important quality—compare Solita Monsod with Cory. If we must have a woman President, let's have Monsod, despite some policy errors, replace Cory. Whatever their policy differences, she's the Mrs. Thatcher of the Philippine scene. (Also, you get two for the price of one—Chris is a high-powered technocrat).

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

8/22/86

1. Given the U. S. role in bringing her to power, I understand the necessity for all-out public support for Cory's government, but I shudder at its one-sidedness, which if she should go under, will be a major U. S. policy defeat. We advance generous economic aid and political support; she and her strongest supporters in the Cabinet, party, Concom, media and academia, advocate and (sometimes pursue) policies which are directly opposed to U. S. interests. Also, as a convinced Reaganite, I am appalled at the success of the Democratic Party's build-up, launching, capture and exploitation of a Philippine President for partisan political purposes. (Senator Cranston is staking his campaign on getting his picture taken with her; Solarz plans to become a Senator by riding on her back). Also, if she is not persuaded to drop some of her Leftist advisers and policies, U. S. policy runs the risk of repudiation by some of our best friends in the Philippines. (Are Communists bad in El Salvador but good in the Philippines?) Democracy (I prefer the term *popular government*) does not require governments of the Left, whatever the editorials of the *NYT*, the *Washington Post*, and the *L. A. Times* often assert.
2. Arlene Babst has a rather vulgar column (August 20) in which she explains that she felt like vomiting when Menzi proposed to introduce her to Imelda, and suggests Cory will feel a similar nausea when she meets President Reagan. Despite the vulgarity, she's got something. I think the two will have exactly the same negative attitudes toward each other (as indeed they should), and I'm astonished at the recklessness of those responsible for bringing the two together when their political attitudes and policies are about as far apart as they are.
3. Cory's flubbed it again. Her speech to the lawyers, a very powerful group, was another moral homily on their guilt in not having opposed President Marcos *en masse*. They of course sat on their hands. . . So now she's offended the businessmen, Cardinal Vidal, and the lawyers, and God knows corruption is as prevalent as ever, if less centered at the top. Some of her most fervent admirers in Los Baños have already abandoned ship.
4. The visiting U. S. S. R. representatives and their threat to nuke the US bases shows a gratifying lack of knowledge of Philippine psychology. The media can play up fears of nuclear attack very successfully, but an actual threat evokes a combative reaction.
5. American presence in the precincts of the Concom of course invites denunciation by superheated nationalists, but naturally we will ignore such efforts to keep our representatives at arms length. Perhaps it would be helpful, however, to remind critics that in the time particularly of Ambassador Murphy, the complaint was that we insisted on staying in touch with Salonga, Diokno, *et al*.
6. I hope you denounce the decision to fire the Filipinos at Wake. The Pentagon always has the gall to act innocent when one of its contractors makes a move

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

conflicting with our foreign policy. This is the season for stressing the advantages the Philippine enjoys as a result of granting us the use of the bases, and it should be the consistent policy of all U. S. government agencies.

9/22/86

1. The nauseating soap opera performed by President Aquino before the U. S. Congress and, more particularly, its frighteningly enthusiastic reception by the Congressmen makes me realize for the first time how Cassandra must actually have felt. Cory's vulgarly simplistic political history of the past two decades, describing a monster in Malacañang opposed only by Sir Ninoy Galahad, are tales straight out of the Brothers Grimm in the one case and Hans Christian Andersen on the other. To witness the genuflections of the American solons at her incantations of the magic word "democracy" should drive us to despair rather than to orgies of self-congratulation.

The speech's implications for her government's policies are calamitous. She is still running against Marcos, and cannot be dissuaded from looking upon the Communists in the hills, (ignoring their pre-1972 record of terror) as misguided victims of the past regime, who need only a helping hand to enlist in her crusade for democracy, the torch snatched from the hands of a martyred Ninoy. One expects outrageous claims in political debate, but only juveniles take them seriously. If the NPA had written her speech, most of it could not have better served their objectives. Note that even Cory's affirmation of her intention to deal harshly with the Communists if they eventually fail to grasp the olive branch (how many graves do the olive branches cover so far?) lacked the ring of conviction with which she first affirmed her belief that the NPA are only brother Filipinos. Those get-tough lines were inserted only as a sop to us Reaganites, though I doubt not that in the end the Communists will make an honest, if heartbroken, woman of her.

In Cory's version of the past two decades, the leader was incarnate evil, his opponents all heroes, and the people a cowed but valorous population. The facts are that Marcos only did in September what Ninoy himself told witnesses in August 1972 that *he* would do if he were in Malacañang, that martial law was welcomed by the great majority of the people, and that they recovered their valor only when encouraged—yes, incited, by U. S. pressure, encouragement and assistance.

2. Swiftly indeed approaches the winter of our discontent. The so-called conservatives in the Concom blocked a provision outlawing the U. S. bases, but by unanimous(!) vote approved a resolution forbidding nuclear arms in the Philippines. This one-ups the policy of New Zealand, which properly led to its exclusion from protection under the Anzus treaty of alliance.
3. The really serious danger generated by Cory's adulation in the U. S. is that it will strengthen her conviction that she is right in pursuing her Sandinista policies. On her return, her advisers will be tempted to insist that it is time

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

to fire Enrile. Are we ready? I hope we have made plain that we consider Enrile as indispensable in his office as she in hers.

4. A few years ago John LeBoutillier wrote a book called *Harvard Hates America*. The title was perhaps hyperbole, but that Harvard hates President Reagan is beyond cavil. The Aquinos, both Ninoy and Cory, share the Harvardian view, but have found it prudent to conceal the fact that they regard him as an enemy—one to be propitiated but never admired, and requiring, it appears, to be lectured on the proper posture to be assumed by world leaders. Thus at Harvard she informs President Reagan that the world acknowledges that non-violence is the way to convert opponents and foil terrorists. Her patronizing attitude is sheer *chutzpah*, but President Reagan, as her most fervent partisans in the Philippines insist, is Rambo. He should realize that it is both naughty and ineffective to clobber Khadafy, even if it was too bad about Klinghofer. I trust that not only President Reagan but Rajiv Nehru feels properly rebuked for dealing harshly with Sikh terrorists, ditto the leaders of Sri Lanka and Peru.

9/27/86

1. I don't know whether anyone expects me to document my assertions concerning the interpretation that Cory's strongest supporters (and Enrile's most militant enemies) will put on her trip to the U. S.: that she has shown Reagan the error and evil of his ways, and that both the United States and the United Nations have accepted her claims to be a new avatar of Gandhi and Saint Bertrand Russell. See attached for two striking examples of my view which appeared on the same day in the *Manila Times*. You should read them (again, if necessary). . . Okay, okay, she is immensely popular—for the wrong reasons.
2. The next move for the Communists is to speak conciliatory words for as long as possible, consolidating their military power, killing off key AFP military personnel. Will they dare to demand Enrile's removal? It seems unlikely to be accepted, but it would have the merit, in their eyes, of putting additional pressure on Aquino from the side of the Left, a pressure that will be unrelenting both in the field (the NPA, the MNLF and their subversive splinter groups) and in the political realm (the NDF).
3. I see the Cabinet these days as a solid majority of Leftists, now that both Neptali Gonzales and Pardo de Tavera have moved Left. Only Laurel, Ongpin and Concepcion can be said to be non-members of the Leftist phalanx. Would *you* invest any money in the Philippines today? I have, despite my absolute distrust of Cory, her Cabinet and the Leftist controlled-media and Academy. . . When I try to figure out why, I conclude that in the end the corrupt but non-revolutionary Philippine culture will foil the demagogues. Maybe God is not a Brazilian, as the Brazilians claim, but a Filipino.

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

9/28/86

1. Finally! !! a tell-it-like-it-is column among Alejandro Roces' Leftist tub-thumping rabble at the *Manila Times*. I don't know Cynthia Sycip, but she bears an honored name, and her column is not only a sharp refutation of all the phony tales spread by the Enrile-haters, but happily suggests that Anding feels that he has been sailing a little too close to the wind, which as all us Marxists are taught, "always blows from the Left."

One point made by Sycip is highly relevant to our assessment of the correlation of forces in the Philippines today, as well as a healthy corrective of Cory's pipe dreams of the mighty army ready to rise at her call: "It was a civilian-backed military mutiny which caused the Marcos downfall . . . during the burial of Ninoy Aquino, millions also took to the streets, but Marcos remained in power." This is a useful critique of Cory's exalted and arrogant claim before her Harvard comrades: "I would be President of all the people and would keep power as I had come to it through the popular will. . ."

10/14/86

1. I have yet to hear Cory express regrets, let alone denounce, the continuing ambushes of the NAFF. (Latest score in Samar; NRR 10; AFP-0). I hope that we realize Cory needs Enrile as much as Enrile needs Cory. Only he can keep the lid on dissatisfaction among the soldiers. And we ought to be glad that Enrile continues to call attention to the growing Communist threat, since Cory doesn't believe there is one. . . Want to make a bet on Rodolfo (Commander Bilog) Salas' future? I'm laying two to one that he will be released, liberated or exchanged before he is sentenced. The CLU's favorite jurist, J. B. L. Reyes, who always weeps for Leftists but never for their victims, wants the leg irons taken off Salas, and Mama Salas complains that her dear boy, who only slaughters people when his nasal passages are clear, claims that leg irons are more brutal than shooting people in cold blood. Those leg irons simply complicate the NPA's task in getting him out. Keep them on; when the NPA springs him, they'll have to leave a leg behind or take his bed with them to their nearest safehouse.
2. Does our Embassy reporting call attention to the appalling lack of *expertise* in Cory's cabinet? and its effects on government performance? The Departments of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (and Labor and Natural Resources) are run by persons ignorant of their responsibilities, former mediamen/lobbyists who are wild to be Senators. If only the whole crowd could be appointed at once to the Senate, the government ministries might be expected to perform with some efficiency. Of course, for those looking further down the road, the forthcoming Congress is apt to be such a circus of individual demagogues that some people will long even for Marcos rubberstamps.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Hail, Philippine democracy! . . . The Americans are living in a dream world. The problem is not constitutional but a corrupt political culture which the Revolution has done nothing whatever to correct. We have had honest Presidents before, but the end results were so unsatisfactory that martial law proved popular until Ferdinand and Imelda concentrated on looting rather than governing. . . Whether the NPA will make its bid for power before Misuari, however, is dubious. Good old Butz has thrown a match into the powder magazine.

10/23/86

1. Cory's government is self-destructing. I wouldn't dare to predict whether it will be the NPA ambushes and assassinations, MNLF attack or Cabinet disunity and ineffectiveness that will blow her government apart, but I can't imagine it surviving much longer. When even the *Inquirer* can editorialize that *The Red scare is real*, she'd (and we'd) better listen.

The root problem is not Cory *leaders*, but Cory herself and her ineradicable belief that Filipino communists are people you can deal with, who will react constructively to overtures of friendship and who were only driven to the hills by the Marcos dictatorship and economic necessity.

The next move for the NPA is to offer to yield on one or two disputed points—enough so that their concessions will nourish Cory's delusions. They won't stop their ambushes and assassination—these can be blamed on AFP provocation or Communist splinter groups not subject to their complete control. (See No. 3)

It is possible, of course—though far from certain—that the government can stay afloat until the plebiscite on the new Constitution, since she will try to convert it into a plebiscite on her continued tenure of office, but for every day she delays the settlement with the Communists, the stronger they will be. Also, further delay in firing the incompetents in her Cabinet (all but three or four), the worse her government's performance will be.

2. I seriously urge that we insist on giving Cory a little of the unsolicited advice that she so much dislikes. Tell her that we strongly advocate that she invite Paeng Salas back to the country and give him a very broad mandate in the government. Now that Perez de Cuellar has been reelected UN General Secretary, Paeng can afford to take a leave of absence. The importance of such a move goes far beyond the potentially great improvement in government performance which would result. Paeng offers a fall-back candidate if Cory should fail. I confess I don't know how Salas' return with such a mandate would be received by Enrile, but Enrile has a full-time job until the NPA is once again defeated. I don't think Laurel fears a man without a political organization.
3. The release of the two AFP personnel, Gan and the other one, is a clear indication that the NPA considered the propaganda value of a concession to

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

the government more important than even the possibility of offering to exchange them for Rodolfo Salas, as does the media hype surrounding their turnover. Also, the approving references to their captors made by the surrenderees suggests the possibility that they were willing accomplices in the whole episode.

10/24/86

1. Halleluyah! Enrile has finally won a battle against Cory's ultra-soft line toward the Communists. Of course it's only a battle, not a war, and we count on more deceitful concessions from Zumel and Ocampo intended to keep Cory on her leftward course. I think the most significant things about the meeting in Angara's home was that (a) none of the participants included Leftist Cabinet members and (b) Angara apparently figured he had better distance himself from the Left with which he had been increasingly identified. When put together with Neptali Gonzales' firm rejection of clemency for Rodolfo Salas, it was a great day for the anti-Communists.
2. No sane man wants a military coup, but only an insane man prefers a further increase in Leftist influence which would probably precipitate a coup. I assume your vehement public affirmation of support for Cory's government are meant to warn both military plotters and Marcos loyalists. I hope they were accompanied by private references to Enrile's indispensability.
3. I have only recently caught up with the *Inquirer's* report of the Revolution as spliced together by the three Australians. Though one of its purposes was to trash the American Ambassador and the American government for not earlier deserting Marcos and leaping on the Cory bandwagon, I think you should find very flattering the characterization of U. S. policy as "covering all bets." U. S. policy should never put all its bets on one player.
4. While I'm congratulating you, may I note that I take it for granted the time of your departure is not far distant. I nominate Jeane Kirkpatrick as your successor. Cory wouldn't like it, but it would be a fitting rebuke for her getting into bed with the wild men of the Democratic Party during her official U. S. visit. More important, it would remind her that President Reagan has two years to go and the executive departments are no less important than the U. S. Congress.

10/25/86

1. The tide, thank God, is visibly turning against the Leftists. Significantly and symbolically, the Manila *Times* is trimming its sails, and these massive anti-Communist rallies help make clear that the Leftists are a minority force outside the government itself. The Cardinal, as usual, is playing weathervane. Only Cory stands firm. As much as I deplore some of her principles, I admire her for standing by them. She will be the last hold-out. Mitra's reported

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

leaving I suspect is an excuse to avoid being exposed for what he is—a Leftist and an incompetent.

Still, Cory can't fire the Leftists in her Cabinet (all but, by my count, three or four) without breaking up the coalition that elected her. What will she do? Appeal to People Power? The resulting battles of demonstrating crowds would bring *her* down. She might now further consider the Paeng Salas move as a means of resolving her dilemma: Let Paeng take the responsibility for demanding the necessary Cabinet changes.

2. The NPA are now playing the hostage gambit. What else will they come up with? Perhaps the seizure of individual towns, perhaps the liquidation of opponents in Manila, perhaps sabotage (the power transmission lines are impossible to protect throughout their length).
3. Enrile's charges of government corruption are of course quite true, though exaggerated in the claim that it is worse now than under Marcos. It is simply the same, with new beneficiaries. He is also specifically referring to Maceda, who has indeed been reported as shamelessly corrupt in the past. But has Maceda dared to milk his ministry's assets already? *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

11/14/86

1. Cory, not Enrile, is what is wrong with the government, and I don't see how American policy can avoid a disaster. It is Cory's policy of cooperation with the Communists at all costs that has (rightfully) alienated the NAFFP. Enrile, whatever his own ambitions, is voicing *their* objections to treating the Communists like ordinary political opponents. I'd rather see the peace talks break down, not because I don't want a ceasefire, but because the Communists will, as usual, drag Cory deeper and deeper into the pit that they are digging for her. If she buys the phony argument that Rodolfo Salas is to be recognized as a member of the NPA negotiating team, she deserves to fall.
2. Of course we oppose a military coup; does that mean we favor a coalition government with the Communists? If so, a coup may be preferable. . . . Saying soldiers should do what they're told is a rhetorical and unhistorical answer. Still, if anyone can be depended on to do the right thing, it is Eddie Ramos.
3. The NPA is making good use of the Koreans they've abducted to demand an exchange of hostages for imprisoned NPAs. The Korean firm has already closed down. More helpful publicity for foreign investors?
4. Olivares-Cunanan writes that she is sure that Satur Ocampo and Tony Zumel are basically good humanists—they all studied literature together at the U. P. before the latter became Communists. It is apparent that this good woman does not realize that they took leave of a humanist society when they joined the Communists—the group that slaughtered Mrs. Quezon, the Quezon daughter and eight others in a carefully planned terrorists attack in 1949. I wonder if Cory has ever heard of the massacre? or has she unconsciously repressed the knowledge?

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

5. The TFD is a Communist-infiltrated organization that should be told to shut up until a corresponding organization is established to probe and punish Communists atrocities.
6. To repeat—it's *Cory*, not even her Leftist cabinet colleague (though now Benigno and Locsin are daily adding to her disrepute), or even the NPA, that is the problem. She lives in a world that is intelligible only through Alice's Looking Glass. You can visualize her Cabinet meetings as Mad Hatter's tea parties. Also, my own first-hand knowledge of Japan suggests that Cory's schoolgirl *haiku* and *bonzai* enthusiasms fell flat there, and the serious boobos committed by Benigno and Locsin (making public the Emperor's highly private apologies for Japanese cruelties in the occupied Philippines; publicity for the Japanese participants in Marcos' corrupt deals) will be deeply resented by her Japanese hosts.
7. One aspect of the ConCom's deliberations that has gotten less attention that it deserves is that Ople not only starred in the ConCom, but has, as a result, moved to the front rank of Presidential contenders. Don't underestimate that I call acting and sounding *Presidential*. From the American viewpoint, he's less satisfactory than Laurel or Enrile, but he's now number three hands down, and he fits the statesman role better than the hot-tempered Enrile and Laurel.

11/15/86

1. It will be a terrible blow to Enrile and the NAFP if it turns out that soldiers killed Olalia. He was certainly a Communist sympathizer, so his departure will not be mourned by the NAFP, but I think that the brutality of the crime suggests professional criminals, which may point to businessmen harrassed by the KMU. . . Naturally, if it turns out that the NAFP did it, the guilty should be promptly court-martialled and executed.
2. Don't assume that Balatbat will be convicted, despite overwhelming evidence against him. Such high-placed personages always buy or wriggle their way out in the Philippines. If he is given bail, he'll flee; if he isn't, he'll buy enough witnesses to offer a judge an excuse for failing to convict; if he goes to jail, he'll buy his way out. Anyone who thinks that a new government means a new legal system or practice has rocks in his head. That vicious system long antedated Marcos and will outlast Cory. We did our best for 48 years but failed in the end.
3. The peace and order situation in the part of Laguna that surrounds Los Baños has never been worse. People are not going out at night and rapes are not uncommon. Whole families have recently been killed, one by disemboweling all its members, another in which the 4 year old son was literally nailed to the wall. This salvaging is one of the results of Cory's soft policy at the top. Lower-level peace officers take their cues, as well as their orders, from above. Los Baños, which went comfortably for Cory, has deserted. The Makiling

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Ladies Club, an elite group was solidly pro-Cory. Now they call her *mahina* (weak) and many are hostile.

4. The KMU is overplaying its hand, and Cory is encouraging it. Everyone but the killers share in the indignation at Olalia's savage murder, but the investigators must be given a week or ten days before bullying the public with demonstrations and threats. Cory is reaping the harvest of her program of sweetness and light—inviting violence from both right and left extremists.

11/25/86

I am signing off, appalled by the U. S. rejection of the distilled wisdom (to go no further back) of Acheson, Dulles, Kissinger and Brezinski, wherever Communism was encountered. I realize that there have been dissenters like Vance (and President Carter), Senators Kennedy, Dodd and Cranston, but I had assumed they spoke only for the Leftist fringe. But here we are, not only tolerating but applauding the President of the Philippines, who insists that the Philippine Communists are just another political party. To top it all, we have persuaded President Reagan, against all his instincts and Cory's near-insulting behavior toward him during her trip to the U. S., to enthusiastically endorse her Presidency. We are suicidal.

They may be dancing in the seventh floor corridors of the State Department (for all I know, also on the upper floor of the American Embassy in Manila), now that Ponce Enrile has been decapitated,⁷² but later on, someone will have to answer for American unwillingness to support Enrile's entirely proper insistence that the country's number one problem was to defeat the Communist insurgency, a neglect which finally drove him into a blind ally. "He was stupid," "he painted himself into a corner," is the condescending refrain of the Embassy's representatives. But he didn't paint *himself* into a corner; we *forced* him into it by our blind worship of Madame Cory Kerenski, who is determined to create conditions which at least some of us know will facilitate the Communists' bid for supreme power in the Philippines.

Cory was terribly sad when Olalia was murdered (so were the rest of us), but she accepted Puzon's assassination without expressing a word of regret. (Apparently any friend of Enrile's is better off dead!) She grieves only over the death of a Leftist. So far as the truce negotiations are concerned, she has now accepted the first NDF demand: get rid of Enrile. The NDF's key objective—a coalition government—is one critical step closer. The NDF is still counting, with Mitra's valuable assistance, on being able eventually to shoot its way into the cabinet. Cory admirers are characterizing her firing Enrile as an impressive show of "strength and determination." It is indeed a demonstration of her determination

⁷² President Aquino fired Enrile in late November; he had discussed, possibly even planned, a coup brilliantly code-named God Save the Queen. See footnote 74.

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

to pursue her Leftist course at all costs. What was hailed as her tough demand that the truce negotiations be completed by November 30 is only another way of concealing her failure to acknowledge she is dealing with an enemy, deluding herself that she is dividing the insurgents. The NDF will meet the deadline; they have already achieved their immediate objective, Enrile's ouster, and they will offer a concession or two to keep the talks going until they are ready to make their next move.

Let's also stop feeling so virtuous about Ileto's replacement of Enrile. Ileto is an excellent soldier, but he was selected for the wrong reasons. Cory loves him because he opposed using the army to enforce martial law. His reputation as a Huk fighter is well established, but there is no evidence that he has any qualms about Cory's peace-at-any-price policies. In Magsaysay's time, the Huks were first crushed before Magsaysay extended the hand of fellowship.

The claim that Cory will now reorganize her cabinet "to balance things out" is poppycock. She will throw out a few Ministers who have proved an embarrassment because of their incompetence or corruption, but she will cling to the most dangerous Leftists like Joker, Saguisag and Teddy Benigno. In the process, she will have eliminated the only two pro-Americans in her cabinet (Enrile, Laurel). I am, of course, an old-fashioned, blindly reactionary observer who thinks that pro-Americans are a valuable asset. I bow to the wisdom of the graduates of the Center for the Promotion of Democratic Institutions, who prefer Leftists on the preposterous ground that we avoid both Rightist and Leftist extremes. On the contrary, we simply make the move to the extreme Left in two jumps.

I understand that we are desperately eager to prove that we were right in assisting Cory to take power. But have we really decided that anyone who stands on the Left has to be better than someone on the Right? If so, we are wrong—hopelessly, tragically wrong, and we will pay dearly for our error.

. . . Good luck and good-bye. I won't see you on the barricades—you'll be far away by then, but I acknowledge that I owe you a debt for permitting me to voice my fears, however futilely, over so long a period.

Ambassador Bosworth Endorses Enrile's Dismissal⁷³

On December 15, 1986, Ambassador Bosworth appeared before the Foreign Correspondent's Association to give his blessing to Mrs. Aquino's decapitation of the regime's foremost anti-Communist, saying somewhat contemptuously that "a high level of anti-Communist rhetoric" was unimportant, and pointing out that Enrile's dismissal by the President was clearly within her prerogatives. He rejected widespread suspicion that he had encouraged the President to take this drastic step, but added that the U. S. government "greeted the ceasefire in a positive fashion." In the subsequent wide-ranging discussion, Ambassador

⁷³ From U. S. Embassy Manila's Press Release of December 5, 1986.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Bosworth struggled manfully to find positive things to say about Mrs. Aquino's government, emphasizing a rural jobs creation program (which however was an initiative financed by the U. S. Government), and looked forward hopefully to local elections (which would later be postponed four times).

Ambassador Bosworth endorsed President Aquino's dismissal of Defense Minister Enrile as an affirmation of civilian supremacy. Enrile's successor (Ileto), the Ambassador suggested, would "professionalize" the AFP. Bosworth rejected the widespread suspicion that the United States was behind the move—as he said, the State Department had no specific blueprint for the Philippines, but it believed that President Aquino, who not only seemed the best available President, but enjoyed "vast resources of popular support" in the United States, was in his opinion making progress in rehabilitating democratic political institutions, rebuilding the economy and resisting the insurgency. The Ambassador reaffirmed his belief that "democracy was the best national security policy for the Philippines,"—which even as a slogan was faulty and as analysis misleading. Bosworth resolutely failed to acknowledge any rightful grievances on the part of the military, for which Enrile was the spokesman, or the ineffectiveness of the government's anti-insurgency policies.

During his masterfully-handled press conference, Bosworth made one insightful observation on differences between the Philippines and Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, lacking any "collective memory" of democracy, the middle class had fatally made common cause with the Left, whereas in the Philippines, previous experience with democratic institutions had kept the middle class from taking that dangerous course. . . It would have been still more insightful if the Ambassador had taken note of the domination of the media, the academy and the Palace by elements who in fact, like their Nicaraguan counterparts, preferred cooperation with the Left, and if he had acknowledged the extent to which public support for democratic institutions had been eroded by their failure to promote political stability and improved economic performance.

A Paralyzed Bureaucracy

Cory's problem was not only, and as the months passed, perhaps increasingly not primarily, the Leftists in her Cabinet and government so much as the sheer incompetence of many of her appointees (and *their* appointees) which all but lobotomized, and did lame, several key Departments—Agriculture, Land Reform, Local Government and Transportation, and at certain echelons even Education and Labor. The representatives of foreign assistance agencies, for example, were appalled at the ignorance and incompetence on the part of persons selected for their political views and affiliations, who often behaved as if they were entitled to whatever they asked without relating their proposals to overall programs and without supplying minimum data or complying with procedures in the absence of which the funds they solicited were certain to be wasted. Fortunately this was

President Aquino's Government of Human Rights Lawyers

not the case in the Finance Ministry and the Central Bank (where there had not been a purge of capable civil servants), so the critical debt negotiations could be carried on with competence. The same was generally true of the Departments of Justice and Commerce. The problem of inexperience and incompetence was further compounded by a reorganization that established *five(!)* Undersecretaries in each department (five political plums!) but *no* deputy to the Department's Secretary, so nothing basic could be decided in the absence of the Secretary.

Despite the drumfire of criticism from the columnists, few of the specifics of this dearth of administrative talents and skills were recorded. However, Lucy Komisar, in her biography of President Aquino, reported two valuable examples:

In a conversation, the likes of which had happened dozens of times before, Salonga, charged with recouping Marcos's stolen millions, talked to Arroyo on the phone. "You lost it?" Salonga said in an incredulous voice. He listened for a moment, then promised to send over another draft of the document in question. After he hung up the phone, he shook his head and grumbled in a mixture of astonishment and disgust. Draft decrees for implementation of government reorganization, action on an anti-insurgency plan, and changes in the labor law also got buried in Arroyo's office as he insisted on clearing all policy decrees and appointments.

Seeking World Bank assistance for her rebel rehabilitation program, President Aquino tolerated intolerable delays: "... it would be about five months before a cabinet committee was set up to review proposals from the various ministries and another five before the cabinet got around to dealing with the matter seriously."^{73a}

Cory's administration, and particularly her power as a political leader, was further weakened by her tendency to reverse herself frequently on contentious issues. Cory often seemed a switch-hitter, continuously at the plate, but batting left-handed or right handed as she responded to opposing pressures.

^{73a}Komisar, p. 136-137, p. 143.

Chapter VIII

CORY AND THE NPA/NDF VS. PONCE ENRILE AND THE NAFF

From 1969 to 1983, the major political struggle in the Philippines was between President Marcos and Senator Aquino. From 1983 to 1985, Cory Aquino took her husband's place in the battle, and after 1986, though other important players were involved, it was Cory Aquino vs. Ponce Enrile. In the process, Cory increased her power, but diminished in moral stature. She has also shown herself ungrateful, as had it not been for Ponce Enrile, President Marcos would have crushed the February Revolution. In thrall to her unhistorical faith in compromise with the Communists, Cory dismissed Enrile as Defense Minister (when he apparently toyed with the idea of a coup of his own),⁷⁴ and became a heroine to the world's Leftist Liberals.

The NPA and the NDF

Consistent with Mrs. Aquino's concept of democracy and the attitudes of her government of human rights lawyers, there have existed, since the February 1986 Revolution, *two* governments in the Philippines. Each rules certain areas, flies its own flag, taxes its own subjects, administers justice (including a growing number of mostly unreported murders of opponents and former sympathizers throughout the Philippines), supports armed forces and media, and even carries on foreign relations. The legitimate Aquino government disputes only the *right* of the National Democratic Front to these sovereign powers, but hardly its actual exercise. So far, the only attribute of sovereignty denied to the NDF is international recognition, and this is probably not far distant. The defrocked Jesuit-educated priest, Father Luis Jalandoni, is the NDF representative in the Netherlands, and enjoys the support, moral and financial, of the European Communists. This outpost is probably the NDF exile government abroad.

These things follow from Mrs. Aquino's view of the Communists as simply an opposition party within the framework of her version of democracy.^{74a} In fact,

⁷⁴ According to a Reuter's report (12/8/86), two U. S. envoys, ex-CIA Deputy Director Cline and retired Lt. Gen. Robert Schweitzer, traveled to Manila in November 1986 to warn Ponce Enrile not to mount a coup.

^{74a} This view was widespread among the Cory enthusiasts. Komisar (p. 140-141) cites one example: "Commander Dante was released to the custody of Doña Aurora. Cory's mother-in-law did not know Dante, . . . Dante testified in court that he had been offered a million pesos (then about \$135,000) to say the Huks had done the killing on Ninoy's order. Doña Aurora was touched. She told Cory, "That man is brave at this time of times, when they can do anything to one, to say he was being offered one million pesos." She thought Cory

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

she often treats them as if they were the real Philippine patriots, since they opposed the "twenty year Marcos dictatorship," which in her view was illegitimate from its date of origin. She rushed to Commander Dante's bedside when he was wounded, but until forced by an aroused public, ignored her soldiers brought low by the Communists. In her democracy, she recognizes as enemies only the Marcos loyalists and the Armed Forces, whom she holds accountable for her husband's death. The NDF need not nominate candidates of their own for public office; the leaders of the Aquino party have conceded all the NDF's minimum demands, which can now be disowned by failing not only the February Revolution, but the strange precepts of Aquino's Philippine democracy. In no country in the world have the Communists made such progress in so short a time. From a hunted, though growing underground army in the hills with only clandestine sources of support, the NDF has been welcomed as legitimate contenders for national power, respected by the government and lionized as patriots and purveyors of justice by the Aquino media. Though there are many columnists critical of the Aquino administration, for example, there is only one real opposition newspaper, the *Independent* (formerly the *Observer*), the tabloid which supported Enrile and GAD in the elections of 1987, and which has a Social Democratic orientation. Out of 26 newspapers, there is not a single thoroughly Conservative or anti-Communist organ. (The country's largest newspaper, the once-Conservative Manila *Bulletin*, to appease the PCGG, which is trying to take over this valuable property because of some Marcos crony shares, is now a Cory enthusiast, though it hasn't yet fired anti-Communist commentators Jess Bigornia and Melchor Aquino. What it *has* done is to appoint the Sandinista Anding Roces as President and the Leftist Nap Rama as Editor).

The astonishing thing about this state of affairs is that it has proceeded without criticism from the United States. In fact, the actions of the Aquino government have been consistently blessed not only with approval, but usually greeted with hosannas by the American government, which has deplored the capture of governments by the Communists in Cuba and Nicaragua (*pace* several African governments!) and their current siege of El Salvador. There are only two possible explanations for this folly: either the U. S. government is bewitched by the sainted Mrs. Aquino and mesmerized by the incantations of her admirers among the Leftists and the Feminists, or it feels it holds a trump in its physical possession of the bases of Subic Bay and Clark Field, where troops could be

must have remembered that. . . When she asked Joker Arroyo about her responsibilities in the job, he laughed and told her there were none. It was good public relations."

Cory's personal views on Communism seemed peculiarly tolerant, considering that she was a product of convent school education, but probably the inference to be drawn was that these schools had also been infiltrated by the theologians of liberation. Komisar also wrote (p. 195): "Later, she would express surprise at her discovery that so many poor people were afraid of communism. "All along, I always thought it was just the rich and down to the middle classes. But it was the poor themselves who asked, 'Is she really a Communist?'"

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

landed to defend them against a Communist takeover. . . But it was the argument that U. S. possession of the bases would be endangered by continued U. S. support of the increasingly corrupt Marcos government that finally tipped the scales in favor of American support for Opposition candidate Cory Aquino, wasn't it? . . . Clear thinking and clear speech are long overdue. The proposition that continued support for a hopelessly degenerated Marcos regime jeopardized the U. S. military bases was correct, but the Marcos counter-argument that without him the bases would be captured by the Communists was also sound if the government which replaced him did not recognize and resolutely confront the Communist threat to both nation and bases.

From the time her government was recognized by the United States (only USSR Ambassador Shabalov rushed to congratulate Marcos as the victor in the snap election—a miscalculation that was soon forgotten and forgiven by the pro-Cory and anti-American Philippine media), the Americans—the Leftists and Feminists passionately, the others more cautiously—have repetitiously reassured themselves that Cory would “take charge”—after the Constitution Convention, after firing Ponce Enrile, after the Plebiscite, after the New Congress, after (twice) reconstructing her cabinet, after the Honasan *Putsch*—but they have never faced up to the fact that she *shares* the Leftists: preference for a government of the Left, whatever the problems that temporarily causes with the bases, or private investment, or political stability. . .

The foregoing is not an argument for dumping President Aquino, nor for supporting either past or future wholesale arrests or detention, nor for the indiscriminate liquidation of civilian populations forced to cooperate with the NPA in the countryside, it is a plea to let the AFP get on with the job of driving the NPA back into their rat holes, where they cannot effectively threaten rural populations with reprisal and both rural and urban residents with assassinations. It is not an argument that sadistic or abusive military officers should not be held accountable for their crimes, but it is a demand that atrocities be designated atrocities by whichever side committed. It is an argument against priests who provide sanctuary for rebels, throwing their ecclesiastical robes over the criminals and justifying their crimes in the name of the holy Revolution.

The Split-level Communist Offensive

The great majority of educated Filipinos are today beguiled by the utterly unhistorical and philosophically false notion that legalizing the Communists somehow deprives the party of what they see as its advantages as an underground conspiracy. This view is unhistorical and philosophically false because the party *always* has *both* an underground and an aboveground party. As to the advantages of having a legitimized aboveground organizations, however, Whittaker Chambers reminds us: “. . . a Communist Party that has been outlawed, driven completely underground . . . can no longer operate because it is severed from the normal life

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

around it . . . cut off from the multitude though which . . . a movement uses personal or social resources to go forward. . .”⁷⁵ Still, communism is so little understood in the Philippines—despite the traditionally militant anti-Communist attitudes of the great majority of Filipino legislators, soldiers, police and parts of the Church—that society is defenseless against the thoroughly infiltrated intellectual classes of the country. It therefore seems very likely that the party will be legalized. There will then exist two Communist parties, one above and one below ground (the latter divided into military and espionage sections), each operating under optimum conditions. The NPA will fight the armed forces and their civilian allies, the NDF and the Partido ng Bayan, with their front groups, such as the KMU, the CLUP and the TFD⁷⁶ will advance the objectives they share with the non-Communist Left. Teachers will have a front group, so will doctors, lawyers, priests and every occupation that can be organized. With the most militant and experienced agitprop experts and infiltrators locked up, their effectiveness could be limited; when President Aquino threw open the jails, they resumed their work, most now wearing halos because they had resisted the ugly dictator Marcos. Some of those released were indeed brave men and women, and they deserve our respect, but not our trust. Some were fighting for the ugliest dictatorship of all: the Communist.

The battle was of course joined at once: Enrile headed the anti-Communists, while the Communist cause was led not by Jose Maria Sison, admittedly a Communist, but identified—both him and his associates—by President Aquino herself and the Leftist politicians, headed by Arroyo under her wing, as the most anti-Marcos, and hence most patriotic Filipinos. “Leftist” became an “in” word. The faculties were re-infiltrated and the churchmen (and churchwomen) further infiltrated. So far as these people were concerned, only the preliminary battle, with Marcos, had ended victoriously; the decisive battle with the non-Communist forces was yet to be fought and won.

Enrile, arguably the most experienced man in the Aquino government (he had served successively in the Finance and Justice Ministries before becoming Secretary of National Defense) knows the Communists, their fronts and their tactics. He had allies in the Armed Forces, who recognized their enemies and wanted to fight them, but their effectiveness was limited by the abusive record of some of their units. (By his resignation from the Aquino Cabinet in September 1987, vice President Laurel joined the anti-Communists forces). Part of the church was still anti-Communist, but Liberation Theology had captured many in the priesthood.

None of this infiltration should cause surprise. It is a worldwide pattern. On

⁷⁵ *Witness, Op. cit.*, p. 59

⁷⁶ I of course do not assert that all members of these and other front groups are all Communists or crypto-Communists. It is the fact that large numbers, often the majority, of Front members are clearly non-Communists that makes them such effective instruments in the hands of their manipulators.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

the other hand, nothing less than astonishing were the inroads made by the Communists into the ranks of the Makati business community, where great wealth was often accompanied by powerful religious commitment. As far as the writer is aware, only Simons has documented the association of elements of the Makati Business Club with the Far Left. He writes:

In October [1985] a representative group from the Makati Business Club met secretly with members of the National Democratic Front, an umbrella organization that covered the CPP and the NPA. Afterward, several of the executives acknowledged sheepishly that they were "positively impressed" by what they'd heard. "Businessmen are becoming more open to the economic appeals of the Communists," said Jesus P. Estanislao, a highly regarded economist who worked with the Center for Research and Communications, a well-funded think tank backed by both the Church and big business. "The Communists have done their work well. I notice a significant increase in sympathy among members of the business community and the professionals. There's no doubt that the businessmen are allowing themselves to be deceived. But this shows how desperate they are."

The NDF, assisted by Liberation theologians, also made converts among the middle class by using similar appeals:

This desperation was felt even more keenly by less affluent Filipinos whose fears and concerns provided the Communists with a splendid whetstone against which to hone their weapons. Two weeks after the businessmen met with the NDF, some five hundred middle-class people attended a symposium organized by a panel of pro-Communist clergymen and academics at a Church-run center in Manila. The overwhelming worry of the audience was that religion would be crushed if the Communists took power. When a priest who had spent fifteen years in Central America assured them that this would not happen, they applauded enthusiastically. No one addressed the question of Communist brutality. Living in Southeast Asia as they were, these white-collar Filipinos seemed oddly insensitive to the stories pouring out of Indochina of wholesale torture and murder.^{76a}

The TFD was thoroughly infiltrated, if not dominated by pro-Communists. Enrile exposed some of the tactics of the TFD in December 1985, when he outlined a position paper of his Ministry to the press. Reacting to a TFD report of "798 political arrests (2,088 in 1983); 53 disappearances (145 in 1983); and 108 salvaging (368 last year)," Enrile correctly objected that the validity of the reports "really depends on who are making the fact-finding. . . . You have to sift between what is fact and what is propaganda." Certain reports on human rights violations, Enrile insisted, were "part of a grand deception campaign launched by the Communist movement in the Philippines." There was "ample evidence," he continued, that this strategy was used by the Marxist movement to alienate the people from the government.

Enrile pointed out that the Philippine armed forces had their own investigative bodies which followed up on complaints. He did not deny that there had been military abuses, but reported various cases in which defense lawyers had

^{76a} *Worth Dying for* (New York, 1987), by Lewis Simons, p. 103.

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

been unable to present evidence to substantiate the claims of the complainants. Citing one of an alleged massacre in Bulacan, in which five people, including a girl, were killed and the bodies later interred in a common grave, Enrile recalled, "Lawyers came to me—Attys. Antonio, Dakila Castro and several others, all lawyers. I told them, submit to me your evidence pointing to who did this. The military claimed it was the product of an encounter; they said it wasn't. When I asked for evidence, not one of them came back."⁷⁷

Charges of torture, Enrile pointed out, were often made after the complainant, caught red-handed, had signed a confession and then sought to void the confession by alleging torture. Scars and burns, documented or photographed, were often the result of self-inflicted wounds. In Tarlac, the Huks had killed Ramon Ortiz of Hacienda Luisita, believing him to be a soldier, and

Ortiz' four-year old son was left wandering in the canefields walking through the night until he was found in Barrio San Sebastian. The three were later caught—one Eustiqio Franco, one Canlas and a third man. Ballistics showed that the empty shells on the site tallied with their arms. "There was no doubt that they were responsible." Under interrogation, the men admitted to the crime. Later, during imprisonment, they retracted their confessions claiming torture and presenting photographs of their contusions. "I prosecuted the case in the sala of Judge Zoilo Hilario of Pampanga and proved that the wounds were self-inflicted. They didn't even present their photographer because they knew he would reveal when he took the photographs."

Discussing the claim of Horacio "Boy" Morales that he was tortured, Enrile said that at the time of his detention, he was in constant contact with Morales' cousin Domingo Cepeda. "Cepeda went back and forth to talk to me, and Morales' family was visiting him and they never mentioned torture. All of a sudden, Horacio Morales claimed that he was tortured and brought the case to the Supreme Court. They never mentioned that he was tortured because if they had, in spite of my instructions, I would have gone there and challenged those people who have custodial responsibility over him." In the case of "Trinidad Gerilla, alias Banes, Alias Trinidad Herrera, alias Norma Salvador, who claimed torture against Lt. Eduardo Matillano of the PC, 2Lt. Prudencio Regis, Jr., and CIC Pat Ordoña after her arrest in April 1977. "The investigation conducted in May 1977 by 1Lt. Cecilia Roque, a female physician at the Constabulary Station Hospital found no signs of physical injuries." Enrile pointed out that the complainant was now working for the government and wondered "why she was willing to work for her oppressors?" Summing it up, the Minister denied he was just automatically defending the military, and pointed out that if it was military policy only to kill its enemies, the military would not now be taking prisoners. In contrast, he knew of no instance in which the NPA had captured a soldier and then spared his life (but see Chapter VI).

... There have indeed been savage abuses committed by the military, and the

⁷⁷ *Mr. and Ms.*, Dec. 21, 1984

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

press has been filled with their misdeeds. When, on the other hand, the NPA slaughters its victims, no one lives to tell the tale and the press is silent. The world was horrified by Sgt. Calley's brutalities at My Lai, but the systematic slaughter of hundreds (thousands?) of village chiefs in Vietnam by the Viet Cong, and the Communist butchering of 3000 civilians in Hue alone was ignored by the world media. In contrast, the execution of a single Viet Cong by a Vietnamese officer, gun at the victim's temple, appeared in hundreds of newspapers throughout the world. The Philippine media, which pride themselves on their sophistication, are, with certain honorable exceptions, naive to the point of folly when dealing with the Communists and their fronts. (Think of the outcry which would have greeted the accusation, before they defected, that journalists Zumel and Ocampo were communists!) One recent outburst by an otherwise reputable and competent journalist parroted the Communist line on the whole period during which the Communists were at long last rolled up and purged in the United States as an example of Senator McCarthy's "paranoia".

The writer of these lines personally knows a great deal about Senator McCarthy which is unknown to or ignored by the world's Leftists. Succinctly put, he may have been an SOB, but a paranoiac he was not. Senator McCarthy in fact rendered an immense service to the United States (and indirectly, to the rest of the world) by his insistence that there *were* Communists in the U. S. government. He eventually succeeded, against the weight of the entire world's Liberal press, in exposing several score of undercover Communists. Many of them had been known at least ever since Chambers' defection, to successively (1) Assistant Secretary of State for Security Adolf Berle, (2) President Roosevelt, (3) President Truman, and a raft of other high U. S. government officials, but allowed to continue their deadly work for the Soviet Union because, like Burgess, McLean and Philby in England, they were of the same class and background as F. D. R. *et al.*, and hence in the eyes of the Liberals, could not conceivably have *been* part of a Communist conspiracy! It is the conviction of the world Left that to acknowledge *any* Communist threat is paranoia; in the eyes of some of the rest of us—alas, all too few—the Communist are no longer just a threat, but aided by the knee-jerk Liberals, a growing cancer. It is a measure of the world's sickness that living monsters are called imaginary bogeymen. Let no one delude himself that Communist recruiters and spotters like the genial Oxford Don, later Lord Anthony Blunt, or their prey, high-placed State Department officials like Alger Hiss and Larry Duggan in the U. S., the academic and diplomat Herbert Norman in Canada, the Foreign Office's Arne Treholt in Norway, or scientists like Fuchs in England or journalists like the late Wilfred Burchett of Australia, exist only outside the Philippines. The worldwide danger today does not so much originate with the Communists as with the Liberals and Sandinistas who defend and protect the Communists.

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

The Femintern

It has been repeatedly affirmed that the Philippines is—and remains—a *macho* society. President Marcos himself, in his campaign during the election he lost to Cory Aquino, said that the Philippines would one day be ready for a woman President, but the time had not yet come—a neat formulation that was one part gallantry, one part condescension and one part preparing the ground for a later Imelda administration. There was indeed a widespread opinion among both men and women that *Filipinas* were not yet ready for the highest political office. This was seldom said in public, as the media had been thoroughly infiltrated by both male and female sympathizers of the Women's Liberation Movement. The one visible expression of male chauvinism was an article in the *Manila Times Sunday Magazine* of September 7, 1986. In an article published anonymously, Attorney Alfonso Felix wrote, under the caption "A Woman in a Man's Job" that her administration was "bound to fail," because she was unprepared for the job, rejecting the argument that she "had learned from Ninoy"—not on the grounds that the relevant skills could not be learned through marriage, but because Ninoy "could not possibly have given Cory what to start with he did not have himself." This unduly militant but not wholly inaccurate formulation, downgrading both Cory and Ninoy, was typical of Attorney Felix, who had publicly boasted of being a male chauvinist. The author's friend the attorney, however, speaks for a tiny minority. Most Filipinos agreed that Cory's lack of government experience, however lamentable, was a defect unimportant compared to the demonstrated fact that she had beaten the old Colossus of Philippine politics. A less remarked, but more significant fact was that she could count on international support from women. The Femintern is currently overtaking the Homintern, the international brigade of the homosexuals,⁷⁸ just as the Comintern, never so alive as since it was formally liquidated, is still No. 1. The American Amazons of Women's Lib of course had no doubts of Cory's qualifications. The members of its Praetorian Guard, like Mary McGrory and Gail Sheehy, trumpeted defiance, and the latter's lengthy description of Mrs. Aquino's "passage" as she appropriately terms it, deserves attention and exegesis.

Writing in the *Washington Post's Parade*, Sheehy was by turns reverent and evangelistic. Like her subject, however, she began cautiously:

Shortly into our two-hour interview, . . . it became apparent that her [Cory's] surface is meant to be disarming—53 years of conditioning in a macho society have made it that way. But beneath that surface, the lady has an inner strength already tested and proven indomitable.

The theme of women's liberation is introduced as a veritable release from

⁷⁸ The Homintern did yoeman's (yoewomen's?) work for the Communists in the Burgess/McLenin/Philby conspiracy. See *The Fourth Man*, by Anthony Boyle (New York, 1979), p. 154. It is also a militant supporter of Mrs. Aquino's government, with reportedly three (four?) representatives in the Senate.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

serfdom (which we may add for our own account, is only a modest exaggeration of the truth). Cory Aquino's conversation glowed with the unabashed zest of self-discovery, and contrasted with the now discredited partner: "My husband, well, he was a male chauvinist," she told me. "He never wanted it said that I was influencing him in anything."

Sheehy's quotations from a conversation between the spouses describing shared responsibilities suggested that Cory had lived her life as a suppressed woman. Thus Cory offered no resistance to male assertions of dominance. She told her husband: "Look, you can do your thing in public life; I'm going to make sure that these children of ours will turn out to be good and responsible citizens. And so we managed very well." Sadly, Cory then believed: "If you think your husband is really worthwhile, then you just have to accept."

For Ms. Sheehy, Ninoy's arrest had its good side: without it, Cory might never have become a liberated woman: "'It was then that I finally came into my own,' Cory began the story. 'I made all the major decisions, it was such a transformation. . .'" This was despite the humiliations involved in the conjugal visits and the fears of more drastic punishment: "Body searches, furtive conversations in a bugged cell, keeping up a brave front for their children, never knowing when one or both of them would be executed—this was the shadowy netherworld of political imprisonment. . ."

When the *macho* husband finally broke down, the interviewer believes that Cory experienced a shock, but a blessing:

"All of a sudden, he broke down and cried. It was a shattering moment for Cory Aquino. "That was the first time I saw Ninoy no longer the confident man I had always known. She alone remained stolid, because someone had to, and she was never quite the same again."

Cory took over leadership of the family at that point, Ms. Sheehy reports, though it escaped the notice of contemporary observers.⁷⁹

Cory began to call press conference, and for the next five years Ninoy coached her whenever she visited.

"Contact with newspaper people made her really sharp," said Cory's mother-in-law, Doña Aurora. But as Ninoy began emerging as a political martyr, Marcos lowered on him a sentence of death. Cory carried secret messages to Ninoy hidden in his thermos and kept him alive with vitamins during his hunger strike of 40 days.

The Sheehy interview then shifts to Ninoy's Pilgrim's Progress after departing the Philippines, elaborating on the fiction, which Cory has preserved and per-

⁷⁹ Vice President Laurel's recollections of the couple are different: ". . . a true *macho*. He even directed the family from jail, issuing orders to his wife and children." *The Turning Point*, *Op. cit.*, p. 15. Cory would in due course not only divest herself of any respect for male *machismo*, she would boast of her own. Addressing the wives of the Asian Development Bank executives in November 1986, she figuratively clasped her hands above her head like a victorious boxer: "It has often been said that Marcos was the first male chauvinist to underestimate me." Preening herself on her successful dismissal of Enrile, she added: "He was not the last to pay for that mistake," Komisar, *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

petuated, of her husband's vision on the road to Damascus: "He traveled to Nicaragua and Lebanon, saw the ravages of civil war and came back politically transformed. Now his obsession became to lead his country toward a non-violent revolution." As we have seen in Chapter III, there is a serious omission if not an actual perversion of Ninoy's personal history here: Ninoy went to Chile in 1971 at the invitation of Allende, who was indeed in the process of transforming Chile peacefully—into a Communist state. Nonetheless, following his visit, Ninoy declared (*Balthazar*) that "Primarily, I'm one of those who believe that change can only come about by violent means."

After Ninoy's assassination, Cory survived a crisis of widowhood and politics, but for Ms. Sheehy, confronted a far more important decision,—would she resolve to be a New Woman, to demonstrate her equality with/superiority to men? . . . Halleluja, she would! As we know from Chapter VI, Cory finally told off her male advisers. In Ms. Sheehy's version:

A year later, meeting with advisers to the opposition party to decide whether to boycott legislative elections, the widow realized she still had an inferiority complex. All the others were men, mostly educated at Harvard. They kept telling her how important she was, but they couldn't listen to her. She noticed that, at least in certain instances, Cory Aquino knew more than all of these men. Out of the blue, she shouted: "If I'm so important, why can't I do it the way I want to? I'm saying goodbye to all of you!"

She confides with a giggle, "I was amazed at myself." And the men said, "No, no, no, we're sorry we did not see it your way." That was the new Cory.

Having asserted herself, Cory developed amazing physical endurance, in the election campaign outperforming both her male opponent and her male associates:

Cory's stamina seemed superhuman. Never losing her voice, never catching the flu that dogged her family, she even overcame her asthma. Hers were not the shiny words packaged by political consultants to push a product, . . .

Sometimes Cory was only Christlike; other times, she was a New Woman, humiliating her male opponent and her male retinue:

She was talking in parables, the technique of Christ. In 45 minutes she could tell her whole life. The influential Jaime Cardinal Sin made a wry comment: "You know, Cory, you and your mother-in-law have made so many people cry, you've got to win all the votes."

Marcos' insults—"women belong in the bedroom; she's a know-nothing. . . ." in Sheehy's interpretation, offered Cory a platform for transformation into a female symbol of moral superiority. Thus Cory taunted her opponent with his misdeeds, confounding her (male) advisers:

Cory slipped out of communication with her advisers and, deep in the south of the far-flung archipelago, went on the counterattack: "Sure, I don't know anything about stealing or cheating and definitely I don't know anything about killing my opponents."

The people loved it. Cory was their daring messenger, the one person in the Philippines who had the moral weight to talk back to the devil. The only

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

people trembling in their shoes at such bold statements were her advisers.

But Cory was not only castigating the devil Marcos and becoming the Blessed Mother; in the process, she was creating the myth of a jailed but saintly husband, shorn of political ambition, who had returned only to restore democracy to his country (an outright fantasy, as Chapter Five has demonstrated):

Ninoy, having died for his country's sins, preaching non-violent revolution to his last breath, already had been elevated to the country's symbolic Christ. Now his widow, having surrendered her most beloved, was becoming a symbolic Blessed Mother.

As elected President, Sheehy emphasized, Cory was completely cured of any woman's inferiority complex, issuing orders confidently: "Bold decisions, delivered in a soft voice, marked her initial weeks in office." When the international bankers (all male) showed up, she chastized them, and faced down, they slunk back into their kennels:

Emboldened, she gave the speech she wanted to all along: "It was a different government that incurred and mismanaged these loans. It doesn't seem fair. Many of us risked our lives to restore democracy. You tell us that you admire us Filipinos for going through such a peaceful revolution—so give us a break."

In Ms. Sheehy's fevered prose, the New Woman had decided that things must change, and that she would change them—now: ". . . she is aware that her shelf life as a fresh product in the steamy market of Philippine politics is no more than a year. She's a woman in a hurry to make a difference." Then, in wildly mistaken rhetoric, the interviewer contrasted the fiction of an "idealistic husband" with Cory's own pragmatic attitudes: "She is also pragmatic, much more so than her idealistic husband. While others believe she has been chosen by God, President Aquino told me she wanted to keep God out of it. She fears Filipinos are too superstitious." . . . Finally, a grace note from the Super Woman, who really is very humble, though insistent. She is at heart a populist, and the world had better believe it! "I just want to voice the desires and needs of our people," she tells them in no uncertain terms. "Then it's up to you people to take care of all the details."

Sheehy was right. Cory was a New Woman, who needed no advisers to tell her what to say, whether she was talking to President Reagan, the U. S. Congress, the U. N.'s Rafael Salas, or the Japanese Emperor. For each she has a message straight from Buckmaster Fuller or John Livingston Seagull: We are all travelers on Spaceship Earth. Whether what she said was wise depend, in the short run, on political preferences, but in the long run, on events. Certainly she was hailed in Washington, New York and particularly in Boston, as an apostle of Love. Strangely, it would take time to dawn on most observers that Cory had sealed a compact with the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party and would pursue their Leftist policies both in the world and at home. She would justify Sheehy's faith. Cory would make her own decisions whatever the risk or cost. In her stubborn partisanship, she was not a reborn, pragmatic Ninoy, but a headlong

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

dogmatic Leftist moralist. She would not deviate from that course during her first fifteen months in office, to which we now return.

In the Philippines, Ms. Sheehy's trumpet called into being corresponding feminist auxiliaries for Cory, *Gabriela* and *Abot Palad* (extended hand) dedicated to good works for the poor and political support for Cory, which were mobilized effectively on behalf of Cory particularly in the Constitutional plebiscite. Some of the latter's members, such as Cecile Guidote Alvarez, whose Leftist theatre group (PETA) had Third World connections (See Chapter IX) as well as a direct line to the Kennedy Democrats, were effective mobilizers of U. S. funds in support of Mrs. Aquino. Most of the prominent members of *Abot Palad*, with the exception of Celia Diaz Laurel, wife of the vice President, were also of the Leftist persuasion. A few of the Feminists have powerful political pretensions of their own. Nikki Coseteng elected for the first time to Congress, fought (unsuccessfully) to be named House Majority Floor Leader.

The "Mendiola Massacre"

On January 22, 1987, the Communists succeeded in getting the martyrs they routinely seek as a matter of tactics by infiltrating a KMP farmer's march to Malacañang, then ordering a violent charge into massed files of police and Marines, some of whom then shot at the attacking mob. Whether the marchers also fired weapons at the police proved impossible to determine, but their mood was ugly, they threatened the Palace defenders, and they used human wave tactics before they were scattered by gunfire. On their way to Mendiola in front of Malacañang, the marchers pulled down the Philippine flag from the Philippine Post Office at Bonifacio Plaza, hoisting a red flag of their own. The leader of the march, Jaime Tadeo, shouting that "blood would flow," refused to purley with the officers commanding troops and slammed his followers into police lines, while they exploded pillboxes in their ranks. The police, and behind them the Marines, then fired and dispersed the marchers, who left fourteen dead and others wounded (four more later died) at the scene.

Despite the media's suspicions of the marchers' motives, and its reverence for the President, she was bitterly assailed for her "failure to dialogue" with the marchers, a few papers even comparing her unfavorably with ex-President Marcos, who had gone to Tarlac in order to meet and confer with a similar protest march whose members he had persuaded to go no further. On the other hand, most of the media were merciless in their denunciation of the police, also demanding (unsuccessfully) the name of the Palace official who had given the Marines the order to fire. Only a few newspapermen, conspicuously Max Soliven, sympathized with the police and their highly respected leader, General Alfredo Lim, who with justice protested the media's treatment of a forthcoming investigation of the tragedy as a "lynching party."

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

The January 27 Abortive Marcos Coup

On January 27, some days before the Constitutional plebiscite, there occurred what appeared to be an actual attempted *coup* by Marcos Loyalists. Villamor Air Base was attacked by a small military contingent, Sangley Point was nearly seized by another small uniformed group. Channel 7 television was occupied, and civilian hostages taken by troops known to be Marcos supporters. In Honolulu, a chartered 707 jet was set to take off with ex-President Marcos and Imelda Marcos aboard, but its departure was prohibited by U. S. authorities. The rebels were repulsed after a brief fire fight with casualties at Villamor, the Sangley attack was betrayed and quickly snuffed out, but the *putschists* at Channel Seven were not flushed out by appeals, threats and teargas until Col. Canlas and his men were able to mount an effective public protest against the hostile attitude of the Cory government toward the Armed Forces and its coddling of the Communists. Outside the TV station, civilian sympathizers of the deposed President blocked traffic for two days on an important highway artery.

The aborted *coup* provoked recriminations on the part of the Leftist members of President Aquino's Cabinet and most of the press, but significantly, also criticism of the President for her currying favor with the NDF and a lack of appreciation for the genuine grievances of the armed forces. Though most of the media howled that Cory must have the heads of the mutineers, Max Soliven reminded the President that she

... needs a ceasefire agreement and "peace talks" with her own military – all 250,000 of them—much more than she needs peace talks with the 5,000 rebels of Nur Misuari's political road-show, the so-called Moro National Liberation Front.

Sure, there was a Marcos "loyalist" coup attempt a week ago—but the loyalist grab for power was only the tip of the iceberg. Col. Oscar Canlas and many of his men can readily be linked to Danding Cojuangco and the departed Gen. Fabian Ver—this is in their records—but what they did was not-too-quietly applauded by a lot of military men who don't want Marcos back, even dead. . .

The men in uniform still don't feel that they really belong, or that she really has them in her affections. The way they see it, each time trouble erupts, it's the police and the military who get the blame.

Cynthia Sycip was also sympathetic, pointing out that many of Cory's Cabinet members could not be objective because of earlier conflicts and confinement by the military:

... the President should revamp her whole Cabinet, whom Enrile calls "all inefficient and inept" and replace them with individuals with more centrist or sane perceptions. How can we expect people who have had hang-ups with the military to be objective and untainted by personal prejudices? Like the President, most of the influential members of the Aquino Cabinet have had traumatic experience with the military during the repressive regime of deposed President Marcos.

Cory and the NDF/NPA vs. Enrile and the NAFP

In Art Borjal's column, the military was allowed to speak for itself when Borjal quoted Cadet Rommel Ong of the PMA *Newsletter* at length:

... what is painful to accept is the fact that their fate (PMA officers slain by NPA units) occurred under circumstances when the deceptive laurels of peace are being waved about in the air and at the same time shackling the military establishment from taking any positive steps to counter the activities of the rebels but rather contend with the resolution of an "Active Defense" which is nothing more than a euphemism for awaiting for that proverbial bullet with your name attached to it. . .

"How long shall we delude ourselves of peace . . . while the Communists are strengthening their mass base in the outlying barrios and towns? They have already established an above ground political party. . . In some cities, there are reports of infiltration of urban elements wherein even the city of Manila is not spared. . . In Thailand, Jose Maria Sison is 'daringly' pointing out that the present government will not last more than two years and communism will gain the upper hand by the 1990's. . . Shall we wait until the strategic stalemate has been reached?"

The Constitutional Plebiscite

The plebiscite of February 1987 was supposed to be one on the new Constitution framed by President Aquino's appointed Constitutional Commission, but it was later converted, by the President herself, into an expression of approval or disapproval of her tenure as President—what in President Marcos' time Cory's fervent disciples called "participation in forging the population's own chains." Hardly one in a thousand Filipinos had read the document, which was long, wordy and full of contradictions and imprecisions, and about which there was hot dispute on several key provisions. Even the *Manila Times*, Cory's enthusiastic supporter, finally recommended that it be rejected or postponed. However, there was no disputing the President's continued personal popularity, and the attempted January 27 *coup* undoubtedly frightened many who disapproved of the Constitution, increasing its approval by a substantial margin, which in the end was nearly 78%. No observers, so far as the author is aware, suggested that the Communists, who publicly advocated a "No" vote, might have secretly instructed their membership to vote for President Aquino, who up to that point had supported policies favorable to their growth. However, when the disciplined membership of the oppositionist and conservative, anti-labor union Iglesia ni Kristo (300-400,000 votes) were also instructed to vote *Yes* (what price did the government pay?), it left only Ponce Enrile, the NAFP and the die-hard Ilocanos and Loyalists of ex-President Marcos left to vote *No*, and Cory's Comelec had deprived soldiers of the right to vote except in their home districts—an indisputable case of discrimination, which was denounced, without effect, by the military.

So the plebiscite was a thunderous approval of Cory as President, and her personal magic would extend to her hand-picked candidates but not to her

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

policies, as she would discover when the forthcoming Senate and Congressional elections passed judgment on the one and subsequently legislation on the other. The question of whether the vote on the plebiscite would also bring both peace and foreign investment, as she promised, was soon answered by a flat negative.

A Visiting Journalist Discards Rose-Colored Glasses

If the State Department and the American Embassy in Manila could see nothing but strength and virtue in Cory's government after one year, there were those, apart from any Cassandra, whose judgment differed radically. Lewis Simons wore no rose-colored glasses, even if he was convinced that Enrile was a knave greedily scheming for power. Two paragraphs in his Epilogue, written just after the Constitutional plebiscite, pitilessly summarized Aquino's performance, ripping away the Emperor's robes with which the U. S. government had clothed their Golden Girl:

Although she held the same dictatorial powers that Marcos had retained from the martial law years, she seemed incapable of exercising them, either vengefully or benevolently. Aquino, totally inexperienced as leader and a decision maker, floundered. Sensing her weaknesses, those who'd been tossed aside with Marcos and those who thought they could gain power in the vacuum he left behind went for her jugular. Within weeks of the jubilation at Malacañang, Filipinos were displaying their propensity for self-destruction. Political intrigue blotted out cooperation for the good of the country, particularly the sacrifices required to institute vitally needed land reform. Her enemies were not the only ones who stood in her way. Many of those closest to her, including her appointed advisers and members of her family, dominated the new president's time with what they unabashedly acknowledged as political gamesmanship. At sea in the world of economics, Aquino stayed away from the hard choices she should have been making. She flailed about, assigning the wrong people to essential jobs, listening to a cacophony of opinions, and otherwise dissipating energy. Marcos had warned of this during the early stages of the campaign when he said that the presidency allowed no time for on-the-job training.

Aquino's advisers were those who'd stood by the family over the years. Many were civil rights attorneys. Their liberal credentials were impeccable, but the same instincts that drove them to fight the Marcos dictatorship for twenty years blinded them to the new realities they had to face now that they were in government.^{79a}

^{79a}Worth Dying For, p. 305-306.

Chapter IX

THE SECOND AQUINO CABINET AND THE MAY 1987 ELECTIONS

The second Cabinet of President Aquino was an improvement over her first, but still mediocre. She had eliminated one each of those most firmly identified in the public mind as grafters (Maceda) unacceptably pro-labor (Sanchez), *pariente*-ridden (Mercado) and the prime symbol of the spoils system (Pimentel). Mitra, at agriculture, who was clearly a better p. r. man and politician than a bureaucrat, was returned to the political circuit. Still, she retained Arroyo, who was not only a symbol of the Left, but a mediocre manager.⁸⁰ The arguably most outstanding member of the first Cabinet, Dr. Alran Bengzon, tipped as Arroyo's successor, was passed over, and Mrs. Aquino almost ostentatiously failed to offer a Cabinet position to Rafael Salas, the Philippines' senior UN official and a technocrat of world-wide reparation. Salas' subsequent death undoubtedly removed an embarrassment for the President, who seemed resentful of his renown and suspicious of either his capacities or his ambitions. One thing was made crystal clear: Cory did not like to share either the limelight or decision-making with anyone other than Arroyo, with whom she was reported to spend up to six hours daily.

The President also lowered the quality of her Cabinet personnel when she replaced Enrile by Iletto, who though he had both military and diplomatic expertise, lacked Enrile's valuable government experience in three ministries including service as Customs Commissioner. However, Mrs. Aquino brought reputation and talent, if not zeal, into the graft-ridden Ministry of Public Works when she persuaded financial expert and NAMFREL representative Vicente Jayme to take over from Mercado. Carlos Dominguez, who as Undersecretary of Agriculture had provided some of the expertise that Mitra lacked there, was moved to the Department of Natural Resources, where he would be forced to clean out the Augean stables left by Maceda. He would shortly thereafter be moved back to Agriculture. After much pulling and hauling, Frank Drilon was appointed the Minister of Labor. This, it was claimed, was a victory for the employers, but Drilon's selection was rather a concession to the needs for some-

⁸⁰ A reported request (in March, 1987) by the United States (conveyed by visiting Gaston Sigur, U.S. assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Department of State) to fire Arroyo was rejected by President Aquino, who in effect explained, as President Eisenhower had referred to Sherman Adams, his disgraced Chief of Staff at the White House, "I need him." Where Eisenhower failed, Cory for long succeeded in clinging to her most intimate adviser, who spent increasingly more time with her. Only her image-maker Teodoro Locsin, Jr., shared in this behind-the-scenes power.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

one more acceptable to foreign investors. The Department of Agrarian Reform was improved by Heherson Alvarez' departure, despite a failure for months to appoint a successor, as Alvarez had but nothing to offer but experience as a p. r. man and lobbyist, and had used the department solely to promote his campaign for the Senate. Arroyo scored another triumph when his assistant Fulgencio Factoran was appointed to replace Dominguez at the Department of Natural Resources.

Those mysterious figures behind the scenes—reportedly the Jesuit Mafia—seemed less ubiquitous after the reorganization, apparently having turned their attention to electing a Congress controlled by Aquino candidates. In this role, they were less effective. The shock troops in the campaign for the Senate and local elections would have to be the Leftist cause-oriented groups, whose grass-roots were shallow except among the priests. Columnists had informed their readers that a so-called “Council of Trent”—a conservative Cabinet element consisting of Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin (assisted by Central Bank Governor Jobo Fernandez) and Minister of Commerce Jose Concepcion, had won the struggle for decisive influence over the President, relegating Arroyo to impotence. They were wrong. Despite what was said to be strong American backing and the advice of Jesuit and *Opus Dei* conservative backers, the Council of Trent proved powerless to limit Joker's power. In fact, he went from strength to strength as his numerous associates for the U. P. law class of 1952 fanned out through the government.

Kidnapings, Coups, Vigilantes

In the weeks leading up to the national elections of May 1987, the news was dominated by (1) the final liberation of Noboyuki Wakaoji, kidnapped head of Mitsui in the Philippines, (2) quarreling and fire fights between Muslim factions in Mindanao, (3) strenuous efforts by Mrs. Aquino to transfer her popularity to her party's Senatorial candidates, (4) the emergence of anti-Communist vigilante groups and (5) wildcat military mutinies, which the newspapers featured as failed “coups” against the Aquino government. The President continued her fervent calls for national unity, repetitiously pronounced moral homilies and offered other public exhibitions of piety. The paucity of her government's programs, however, finally provoked a fierce criticism, though significantly, not by local journalists but first by the visiting representative of an American newspaper. Richard Nations of the Los Angeles *Times*, under the brilliant caption “Suffocation in Sanctimony,” wrote on April 22:

Nobody doubts Aquino's good intentions. But this may be the problem. Democracies, after all, were designed with ordinary powercraving mortals in mind. Who in the Philippines today can conceive of a tyranny of good intentions—let alone resist it? . . .

The truth is that Aquino, like all “historic personalities,” believes in elections for everyone but herself—not because she fears losing but because she is

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

convinced of her righteousness as the moral center of the "February revolution."⁸¹

Cardinal Sin diminished his stature by once again playing the humorist when Wakaoji fled from the country to avoid any interrogation on just what had occurred. The Cardinal, claiming undefined credit for the Church, cracked jokes in poor taste. He told a press conference that no ransom money had been paid for Wakaoji's release, but admitted that what he called a "contribution" or "donation" had been given to the kidnapers to cover "his board and lodging, food and medicine(!)" The "donation" was generous; it was estimated at between one and three million dollars. As one newspaper critic put it, the Cardinal, "with his familiar volubility and sanctimony, mangled the point. He sermonized where he should have provided food: And the heroic role of the Church was hopelessly overwhelmed by the row over the ransom money."⁸² . . . It is well that Wakaoji was released when he was; a nasty Japanese-Philippine row was building up over the failure of the Philippine government to hasten Wakaoji's release from known kidnapers, provoking a Japanese press campaign against the Philippines, one which the Filipinos answered by recalling Japanese atrocities committed during the occupation. The Japanese, though themselves masters of indirection, have little patience with the Philippine political culture, in which known criminals are coddled by politicians and police.

Cardinal Sin also electioneered for the Aquino government when he endorsed "Ten Outstanding Senatorial Candidates." Listed "according to rank," they were Alberto Romulo, Teopisto Guingona, Jr., Vicente Paterno, Leticia Ramos Shahani, Raul Manglapus, Jovito Salonga, Rene Saguisag, Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Wigberto Tañada and Edgardo Angara. All came from Cory's party, but naming only ten names raised eyebrows when the list failed to include such candidates as Butz Aquino. It also plunged the Church directly into politics, which the Cardinal's subsequent unctuous disclaimers did nothing to correct.

That vigilante groups were springing up hardly came as a surprise. The President's Leftist government and its cooperative attitude toward the Communists had awakened apprehensions on the part of that large sector of Philippine society that still viewed the growth in Communists influence with fear and hostility. The armed *Alsa Masa* (Rise, masses) in Davao was the most prominent of these groups, but several others had emerged. The President's government, all too characteristically oscillating between verbal swings to left and right, then endorsed such organizations, "if unarmed". Since the groups had arisen in large part in defense against armed rebels, it seemed a strange response on the part of the government, and was in fact a knee-jerk reaction to criticism by the Human Righters.

⁸¹ ~~The complete text of his superb despatch can be found in Appendix A.~~

⁸² *Observer*, Editorial (4/6/87)

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Hardly a week went by without wildcat mutinies or rumors of *coups* by smaller military units, disgruntled by the government's lack of clear directives in dealing with the armed dissidents. President Aquino and her spokesmen consistently blamed Marcos money and plots for these unsuccessful military "coups". A serious tragedy was then apparently only narrowly avoided, when a bomb exploded at the Philippine Military Academy during a rehearsal of graduation ceremonies, where President Aquino was scheduled to be the guest of honor. The blast caused several fatalities and yet another investigation was set in motion. After arrests were made, President Aquino appeared at the graduation rites, which then occurred without disturbance.

One would have thought that President Aquino had so many problems of her own that she would have little time for paying attention to, let alone commenting on developments abroad, but undoubtedly at Locsin's urging, she rushed to congratulate Argentina's President Alfonsín when he was reported to have quelled a military mutiny. In a gratuitous, but wholly characteristic Locsin preachment, she congratulated Alfonsín on what she understood were steps taken to discipline the Argentine armed forces for their resistance to punishments for their alleged misdeeds during the former military dictatorship. In a telegram suffused with the regime's hallmark of self-righteousness, Mrs. Aquino intoned:

"My prayers and the prayers of the Filipino people were with you and the cause of Argentinian democracy," she said. "I know what you are going through, and I know that faith you have expressed so eloquently in the fundamental democratic loyalty of the common people."

It was impossible not to conclude that Mrs. Aquino's advisers, unable to make progress at home, were still playing to the world gallery, hoping that the telegram to Alfonsín would promote the campaign of her supporters for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Meanwhile, some of Cory's own chickens were coming home to roost. She was unable to reply effectively to charges that part of the jewels confiscated from Imelda's treasure trove had disappeared on their way from the Palace to the Central Bank, or that P2.8 millions from the receipts of Pagcor, the government's gambling enterprises, had found its way, after inadequate laundering, into a fund for the President's "special projects."^{82a} It was widely believed that her highest priority special project was the election of her party's entire Senatorial slate. As Nations had said, Cory might be virtuous, but stealing had not stopped. Her own *parientes* and cronies had replaced those of Ferdinand and Imelda. Meanwhile, as far as Cory and her candidates were concerned, they were all still

^{82a}Curiously, these charges were directed at the same parties as the later (November 1987) complaint by the representative of an Australian gambling syndicate that he had been cheated out of a Philippine gambling monopoly after passing one million dollars to "Tingting" Cojuangco, wife of Cory's brother and Congressional leader Peping Cojuangco of Tarlac. It was later explained that the Australian had been deceived by a double of the beautiful "Tingting."

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

running against Marcos. It was necessary to elect them, with or without competence or whether their President had any program, Cory told the voters, in order to prevent Marcos' return.

The May 1987 Elections

The elections for the Senate and the House of Representatives proved what Richard Nations had already observed—that the Cory government was a (plebiscitary) dictatorship even if clothed in sanctimony and repeatedly endorsed by acclamation: what Cory wants, Cory gets. As one of Manila's political cynics, with eloquent imagery, had earlier told Nations, "what the country wants is Marcos with a rosary." Cardinal Sin was in the end less enthusiastic, having seen an unprecedented Philippine anti-clericalism develop as he threw the weight of the church into the campaign, but nothing could diminish the enthusiasm of Cory's vociferous American backers such as State Senator Al Graham or Boston University's Center for Democracy, which with a sanctimony equal to Cory's own, enthusiastically transmitted the blessings of the Kennedy wing of the Democratic party. She has been their darling since the time of her massively-financed U. S. buildup before the election in which she defeated Marcos.^{82b}

Cory personally did most of the campaigning for her team; despite earlier claims that issues rather than personalities were now at stake, the only real issue was whether Cory should be given, as she insisted, a Senate of yea-sayers. At last half of her Senatorial team were *tutas*. (Lap dogs, as they used to be called in the bad old days of Marcos.) Perhaps half owned constituencies of their own. Cory had earlier said that she needed no opposition; she appealed to the electorate for a 24-0 administration victory, and millions of voters endorsed her team *in toto*. What at first escaped the notice of observers was that such a result betrayed the clear preference of the Filipinos for an authoritarian leader,—as the author argued in his *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*. This was not the first time in history that a crucifix held high had vanquished the sword, but using language more appropriate for the Filipinos, Cory was their *anting-anting*, or magic relic: she would overcome.

The election made Cory outwardly supreme; she apparently had a rubber stamp Congress, but certain other institutions were discredited—particularly the NAMFREL, since its revival in 1985 a Cory organization behind a pious mask of neutrality. It was now disclosed as a thoroughly partisan group. Voting as an act of homage to a Saint, however, made vote-buying less blatant and certainly less

^{82b}President Aquino demeaned her high office by a palpably political message of congratulations to a testimonial dinner tendered to Senator Kennedy in mid-November 1987 in which she hailed the Black Knight of Chappaquiddick who had given her and Ninoy "the kind of . . . support that only one who experienced the same thing in his family would give." Cory would thus identify with Senator Kennedy rather than Mary Jo Kopechne.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

visible. The blind faith of her partisans drove one of Cory's fervent supporters, Rodolfo Romero, to agonize that her candidates had been chosen "under a selection system that was biased in favor of anyone—Loyalist or not, competent or ill-qualified, clean or corrupt—who was prepared to finance his own candidacy and extend support to the Senate slate of the Administration." Perhaps the most inspired comment, however, was one by columnist Tony Gatmaitan in the *Manila Standard*, that Cory was Reina Elena, the Philippine May Queen: "The day after our biggest and bloodiest Flores de Mayo festival, Corazon Aquino still looks resplendent as ever—the unchallenged Reina Elena. Once again only she can say, "... There shall be no other gods or goddesses before me."

When the Opposition shouted that it had been cheated (which was not untrue, but fraud only decreased the Cory margin) and that an ugly NAMFREL-Comelec plot had been devised to defeat them (a charge exaggerated, but not without basis), Cory was at her most majestic: "the Filipino people are so committed to democracy that nobody can do anything against their will" (a claim both wrong *and* right; those who had not been cheated were the choices of an authoritarian leader). Where Cory was not majestic, she, like her spousor the Cardinal, was unctuous: "in the next few days emotions will die down and ... the Opposition will accept the people's will."

The campaign for the new Congress had been intense, but surprisingly quiet. The Opposition's Homobono Adaza, who had earlier played a tape of a bugged telephone conversation, mildly embarrassing in character, between Philip Kaplan, No. 2 at the American Embassy and "Tingting" Cojuangco, Cory's sister-in-law, failed to make public other tapes he claimed to have, and the Opposition did not publicize the pictures they said they had two of Cory's Senatorial candidates doing their thing as homosexuals in New York and San Francisco (for fear of antagonizing homosexuals supporting their own slate?), also ignoring a juicy issue by failing to demand that all Senatorial candidates with "green cards" (legal residents of the U. S.) publicly repudiate them (were there also Opposition candidates who held green cards?). By and large, campaign speeches were generally on a high plane. However, if the campaign was outwardly clean, it was frighteningly expensive. So much was spent for posters, radio and T. V. time and for campaign workers that it generated (as it had in past elections) a temporary economic boom.

How to be Virtuous and Still Cheat

Before proceeding with the above-captioned analysis, an important *caveat*: President Aquino's party unquestionably won the May 1986 Senatorial elections by a wide margin. If the election had been as clean as she claimed, however, the Senatorial race would have ended up, just as most of the polls predicted, at 16-8, or at most 18-6, rather than 22-2. Ex-President Marcos' absurd threats to return home may have cost the Opposition one or two seats; sophisticated cheating probably another four seats. When President Aquino called it the cleanest, most

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

honest election yet held in the Philippines, she was unhistorical, inaccurate and/or misinformed. The statement should haunt her throughout her Presidential tenure. In historical fact, the election was less clean than the elections of 1951, 1953, 1955, 1959, 1961, 1965 and 1967. Only the elections held in 1949, 1969 and 1982 were dirtier.

How was the cheating accomplished? First, the misnamed “neutral” (actually fanatically pro-Cory) NAMFREL organization and its volunteers illegally did some of the counting. Second, the school teachers who supervised the precinct voting had been told by Minister of Education Quisumbing that the results would be 24-0, and many of them felt charged with assuring such a result. Third, the OIC’s, nearly all of Cory’s party, and *none* of them from the Opposition, had been told by Minister of Local Government Jaime Ferrer that they must turn out a pro-Cory vote or be replaced. Fourth, NAMFREL’s volunteers filled out ballots ahead of time for bought or illiterate voters. Fifth, and perhaps most important, two NAMFREL volunteers told of a sophisticated computer manipulation (adding a zero to each thousand votes cast for Cory candidates) which allegedly increased by not less than two million the votes of each member of Cory’s term. (Several of her Senatorial candidates received more than 100% of the vote cast!). To be sure, the number of “flying voters” was minimal, few ballot boxes were stolen, and the voting was orderly. Such circumstances assured what might be called virtuous (internal rather than external) cheating.

NAMFREL also revealed its duplicity by utilizing the same tactics as in the election of 1985—rushing in with the results from areas known to be Cory strongholds, in order to lay the basis for a later claim, if necessary, that Cory’s candidates had been cheated so that they could simply *claim* victory, one that would be awarded to them by the world media. None of this proved necessary, but NAMFREL gave away the game plan when it closed operations with only 76% of the total vote tabulated—which showed that Enrile, the opposition’s leader, was number 30! Its results also showed Enrile being blanked in various precincts where he had strong support. Finally, and conclusively, the end results recorded a vote far in excess of registrations.

Significant Post-election Developments

When Ponce Enrile and his associates in the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) discovered that there had been a tremendous response to President Aquino’s call for a 24-0 victory for the Senatorial slate and that only one of GAD’s candidates, the movie star Joseph Estrada, was shown in NAMFREL’s winning column, they simply could not believe that their ticket, with nearly as many outstanding political figures (Kalaw, Puyat, Ople, Golez, Espina, Tatad, *et al.*) as Cory’s had been swamped. They were certain that they had been cheated, though at first they didn’t know how. As noted, there were few if any “flying voters,” and coercion was far less visible than usual. They soon pointed out, however, that the overall figures were statistically impossible. The miserable

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

performance of the COMELEC, which supervised the elections—failing to get report forms to the provinces, delaying reports on the voting, and counting votes of disbarred candidates—encouraged this belief. Enrile and GAD, of course screamed that they had been cheated, and staged a demonstration of their own, which on the first day mobilized only a negligible 10,000 but on the following day, as they marched by the military camps where the February 1986 Revolution had its most glorious moments, soared to upwards of a quarter million (which the Cory press denied), and which caused such consternation in the Palace that “one of its highest officials” telephoned the American Embassy in a panic, asking for U. S. Marines, because the Palace was distrustful of the armed units stationed there. Chargé d’affaires Philip Kaplan of course refused, saying that none of the Embassy’s sources suggested that the demonstrators were trying to overthrow the government.

There were those who principally decried the election because it so clearly demonstrated that only millionaires (or *Tita Cory’s tutas* who were subsidized by Palace funds) were electable to the Senate or even the House. The most significant aspect of Cory’s electoral sweep, however, was pointed out by Melchor Aquino, one of the few consistently Conservative columnists still appearing in print. This was the growth in strength of Communist-sympathizing members of the Senate and the House:

... the Marxist groups will have “friends” and “comrades,” who will espouse popular causes on the agenda of local and international communism. Watch these distinguished senators and congressmen in action. They will be chanting in the halls of Congress the same stirring tunes one hears from the “parliament of the streets.” They will be doing the bidding of the communists in the discussion and resolution of political, social, and economic issues on which communism has set positions.

In a word, the communists will have exceedingly useful proxies and surrogates in Congress—just as they have in the executive branch of the government.

Not all of Cory’s supporters were happy. Sister Christine Tan, one of Cory’s Crusaders, visiting Washington, reacted sadly to the campaign by observing that only millionaires could now win an election, and that the difference between the Marcos and Aquino governments was only at the top:

“While (former President) Marcos has been ousted, the system of graft, corruption and bureaucracy is very much intact,” Sister Christine said in a soft, calm voice.

She said the problem was much improved since Marcos held office. “It’s not institutionalized by the top (officials in government) and Cory is immaculate.”

But the political system is still very corrupt and “there is still a lot of nepotism,”...

Sister Tan also criticized Cory for her lack of decisiveness, for her failure to better the lot of the urban poor, and for an authoritarianism based on sanctimony:

She is also faulted by her friends—whom she rarely sees in private any more—for not being more decisive.

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

"One weakness of the present administration is that Aquino is so popular it's hard to criticize her, and when you criticize it is not taken objectively," she said.

Although 70 percent of the population is poor, "no services have been rendered to the urban poor from the government in more than a year," she said.

"We still have no water, no toilets, no sewers, no roads, no jobs."

After what was believed to be slightly over one half of the vote cast had been announced (by NAMFREL), President Aquino began for the first time since her election to the Presidency not only to act Presidential, but dictatorial. The Palace announced that she would not wait for the new Congress to assemble, whatever the exact dimensions of her supposed landslide victory, but would issue decrees on major issues such as land reform, since waiting for the legislature might delay action on critical problems. Still, sanctimony still reigned at the Palace, Joker Arroyo denying that concealing several executive orders from the public which provided for the reorganization of various governmental departments (which would mean a loss of jobs) had been deliberate—such behavior would be "unthinkable" to those who had suffered under the brutal dictator Marcos! In the face of evidence that serious irregularities had occurred, President Aquino, with the same self-righteousness, continued to reject accusations that there had been election cheating. She and her spotless supporters *could* not be guilty of such malfeasance; they were simply incapable of rascality! Such comments reminded those who remembered the Magsaysay days of one of his Cabinet members who shrugged off accusations of wrongdoing by saying that wealthy people like herself had no need to steal. (An investigation showed her wrong).

Parientes would also strengthen Aquino's dictatorial tendencies. Cory's uncle Francisco Sumulong was a leading candidate for Speaker of the lower house; her party's leader and brother Peping Cojuangco, was a major influence both there and in the country at large. (He was charged with heading the lucrative *jueteng* [numbers] racket). Several other relatives (apparently nine) were members of the House, while Butz Aquino, younger brother of the late Senator, was an aspirant for Senate President. At the sixteenth month mark, in other words, nepotism was far more widespread than during the Marcos/Romualdez regime. The provision in the New Constitution that prohibited political dynasties was therefore already a dead letter. The President's relatives of course disagreed, claiming that the constitutional prohibition applied only to appointed, not elected, officials.

One insufficiently-noticed avowal of a new authoritarianism was made by the foremost foe of the Marcos dictatorship and the most prominent pro-Communist in the Cory cabinet, Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo. When the intention of the Cory government to sell its property in Japan was denounced, it was pointed out that there were legal limitations on such an act. Arroyo replied, "If it is necessary, we will repeal certain laws." The *Observer* reacted, noting that absolute power indeed corrupts absolutely. Power had not only clearly corrupted Arroyo, it said, but suggested graft. It witnessed to an "undue haste and earnest-

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

ness of Palace people to sell the properties, especially since sales commissions amounting to millions of dollars are involved. It is in this light that we are reminded of the thesis on power and corruption."

The politico/economic situation, as of the May elections, was fairly summed up by Antonio Valdes of the *Observer* (5/11/87):

Too little has changed between February 1986 and today to warrant this government's claim that it is otherwise, or that it has a coherent platform or plan of action for the future other than the sincerity or moral example of Cory Aquino. She means well, but that is no longer enough to get us out of the rut we're in. . .

All efforts to effect political reconciliation among our people have proved futile. The insurgency problem has escalated. The peace talks in Mindanao have failed, and civil war threatens to break out. The military is demoralized and disgruntled. The Church is divided. Graft and corruption in government is as rampant as ever, and a new crony system has emerged.

The economy continues to stagnate. Agriculture is down, industry is in recession, business on the whole remains sluggish. No substantial foreign investments have come in, and there are few buyers for idle assets to be privatized.

A month later, Tony Gatmaitan of the *Standard* was equally critical. Referring to the closure, in the face of unacceptable labor demands, of the prestigious *Business Day* by its publisher Raul Locsin, he wrote: "The closure of *Business Day* and Manila Bank, land reform, and breakdown of law and order, and labor militancy are among a growing list of concerns often discussed in the boardrooms." Viewing the scene from the perspective of Makati high finance, which had bankrolled Cory in her campaigns, Gatmaitan said that they now saw "an inept bureaucracy and an absence of direction from the top."

A Belated Response to Communist Assassinations

In late May and June 1987, there were at long last signs that the U. S. government was growing impatient with Mrs. Aquino's coddling of the Communists. When Ramsey Clark and his traveling Leftist *Commedia dell'arte* arrived to view darkly the efforts of what they predictably called a CIA plot against democracy, General Ileto, obviously briefed on the politics of the group, surprisingly called its bluff, even referring to Clark as a "Communist." The increasing tempo of NPA assassination of police and military figures apparently even had some effect on the President, though she continued publicly to deplore attempts on the life of the Communists (Commander Dante)⁸³ and merely to regret killings of the police. On Independence Day, a paltry 5000 persons showed up for ceremonies at the Quirino grandstand in the Luneta, frightening the President's Leftist

⁸³ Commander Dante was the son of a tenant in the Cojuangco *Hacienda* Luisita, and a long-term friend of Ninoy and Cory.

THE AQUINO PRESIDENCY (I)



In her first and most fateful act, President Aquino released Communists from jail. The picture shows Joma Sison, party head, flaunting Cory's "L" sign.



After 100 days in office, President Aquino visits Malacañang with a crowd of well-wishers.

Days of Triumph



Presidents Reagan and Aquino, representatives not only of the United States and the Philippines, but of the world political Right and Left, dutifully smile at the camera.

President Aquino acknowledges the enthusiastic applause of the United States Congress.



President Aquino exchanges toasts with Emperor Hirohito of Japan.



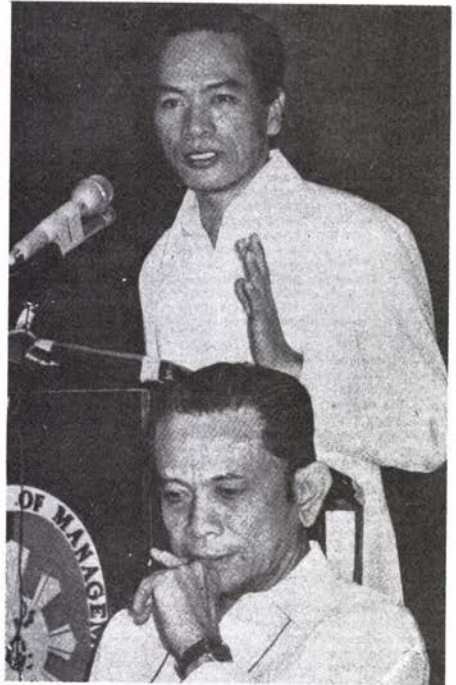
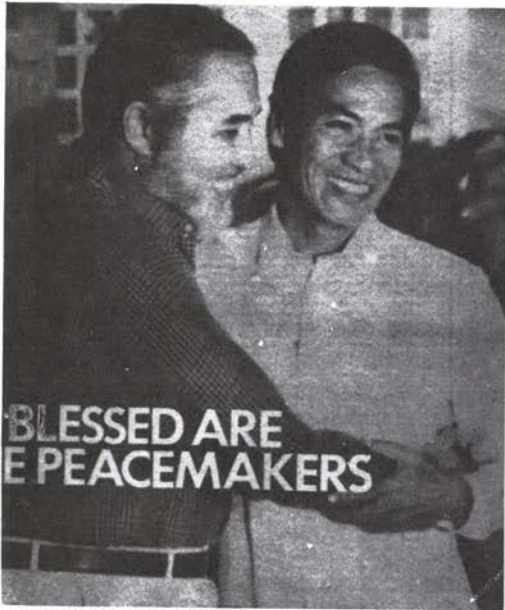
Key Figures in Cory Government



Key players in Cory's government of the Left: A 1984 picture shows Jose Diokno, Joker Arroyo, J.B.L. Reyes and "Chino" Roces, all ultra-nationalists and anti-Americans. Reyes was powerful ally in the judicial sphere, Roces in the media.



Are We Down-Hearted? Certainly not! exclaim the Leftist trio (Saguisag, Sanchez, Arroyo) who had made beautiful music together until the pressure of businessmen compelled Cory to drop Sanchez as Minister of Labor.



The Great Gamble: **(Left)** The government's Ramon Mitra and the NDF's Satur Ocampo, former newspaper colleagues, embrace warmly in the name of reconciliation between the government and the Communists. **(Right)** Still, Teofisto Guingona seems temporarily disquieted as he listens to Ocampo.

Cory's Brooklyn Connection



Congressman Solarz of Brooklyn has been the Aquino government's chief volunteer lobbyist in the United States, and always gets his own information straight from the horse's mouth. Here, at Dartmouth, he confers with his friend George Arbatov, the U.S.S.R.'s number one authority on the U.S.



A great layer-on of hands, Solarz embraces fellow-traveler Joker Arroyo.

Solarz, warmly received by Alvarez, greets "Anding" Roces, Macapagal's Secretary of Education and Cory drumbeater, on one of Solarz' many visits to Manila.



More Cory Conquests



Cory was not always obliged to travel to receive prizes; sometimes they were brought to her. Her feminist appeal is here captured by the photographer. Visiting U.S. Congressional wives took obvious pride in the ex-housewife's successful ascent to power.

When President Aquino received the Steuben Eagle award of the International Women's Forum, Chargé d'affaires Kaplan was there to simpere in approval, along with Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Emmanuel Pelaez.



U.S. and Philippine Chambers of Commerce also render homage. George Drysdale of the American Chamber pins President Aquino while Aurelio Periquet, Jr. of the PCCI looks on approvingly.



Visiting U.S. Peace Corps Director Ruppe, Philippine Director Edward Slevin and Ambassador Filipino control over the U.S. volunteers. PhilippineAmericanHistory.com

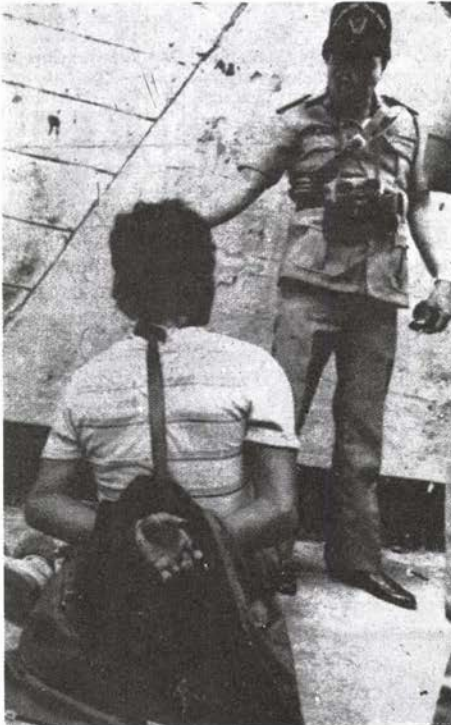
Friends & Enemies



President Aquino's preferred ambience: with Mother Milagros Dayrit, effective rural do-gooder in San Simon, Pampanga.

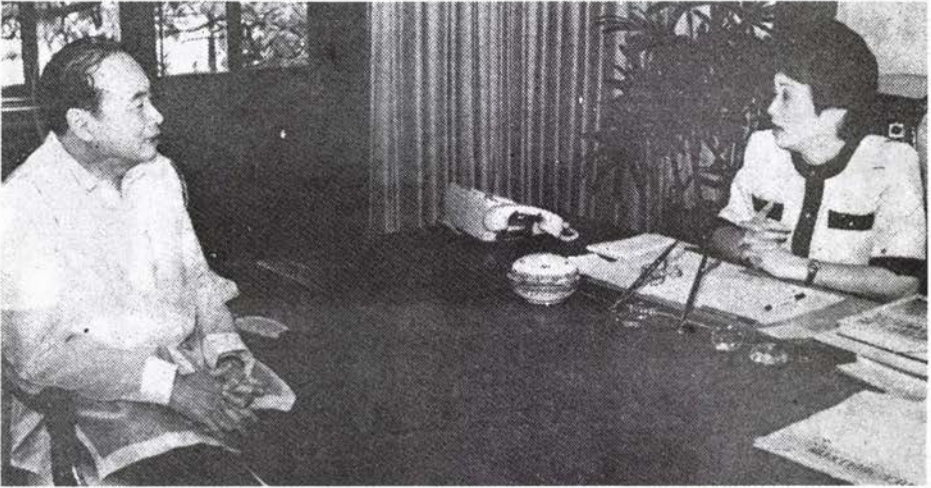


Cory believed in peace, but not with her own armed forces. Here a Manila Times cartoonist accurately portrays her press secretary's efforts to portray Defense Minister Enrile as an enemy.



Ex-President Marcos was still making trouble for both Cory and Enrile when he told troops still loyal to him to seize Channel 7. One loyalist is handcuffed and a youngster is bloodied in the misguided affair.

Friends & Rivals



President Aquino symbolically keeps her distance from Rafael (Paeng) Salas, the Philippines' most distinguished international figure (UN Undersecretary), who was offering to return to assist the President.



Accompanied by Defense Minister Enrile and Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos, President Aquino, in her quest for the Nobel Peace Prize, went all the way to Jolo to meet Muslim rebellion leader Nur Misuari whom Butz Aquino, Ninoy's brother, had rescued from obscurity.



Communist leader Sison showed himself derelict in Philippine **utang na loob** (debt of gratitude) after his liberation from prison, denouncing Cory for (what else?) "betraying the interests of the poor and the nationalists." Here Sison, Communist PnB Secretary Jazmin and their associates hold a press conference.

The Boston Connection



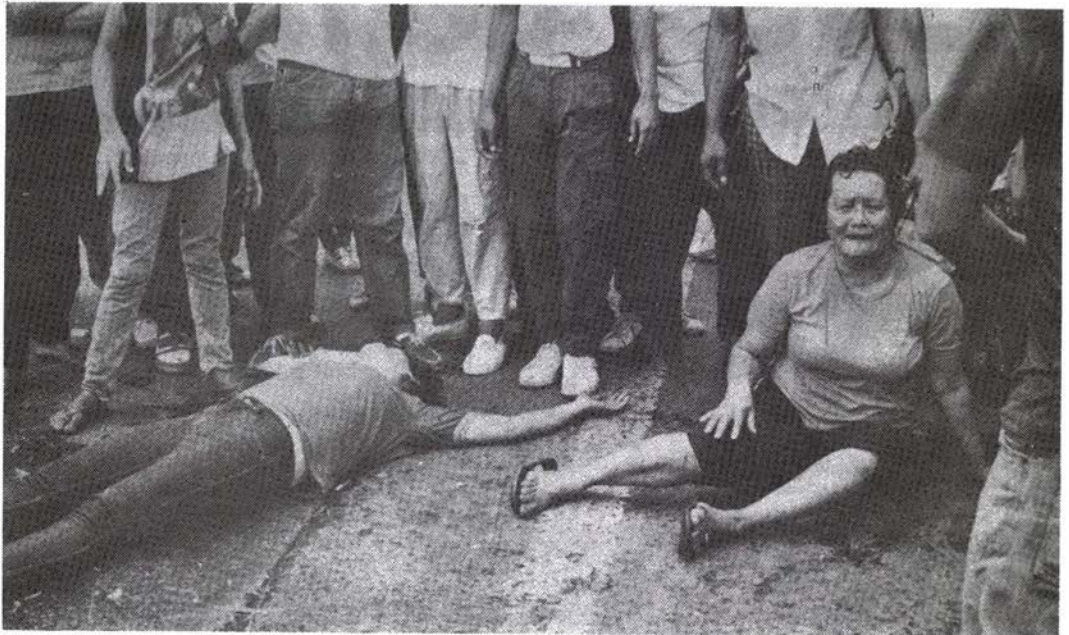
(Above) President Aquino spent early time in office traveling to receive honors; she was especially Boston's and Senator Kennedy's particular darling. The reverence in which she was held by Boston University shows in the faces of (l to r) Provost Jon Westling, Professor Allen Weinstein, and President Silber. (Below) The partisan fellowship felt by Boston dignitaries and Left Democrats for Cory is eloquently expressed by (l to r) Arthur G.B. Metcalf, Cardinal Bernard Law, Governor Michael S. Dukakis, U.S. Senator John F. Kerry and Mayor Raymond Flynn. Only her closest friend, Senator Kennedy was missing.



Failures



What seemed to be mixed signals at the Palace combined with Communist infiltration of a peasant group bused into Manila resulted in another tragedy at Mendiola bridge in front of Malacañang. 18 eventually died.



Marcos loyalists were again dispersed at EDSA, the scene of the Aquino triumph in February 1986.

May 1987 Elections

The Senatorial elections of May 1987 were turned by Aquino into less an election for Congress than another popularity contest. She insisted she needed no opposition, and called for a 24-0 victory in the Senate. She almost succeeded in getting her wish: 23 of her candidates won, and only half had constituencies of their own. The rest were her **tutas** (lapdogs). The cartoon says that Cory's candidates were clones.



Senator Salonga, who topped the polls (in places getting 164% of the vote!) was an honest man, who had been running for the Presidency since entering Congress. In 1964, he poses before the "scholars" whose education he financed with the illegal allowances he denounced in Congress. One of the fruits of his generosity over several years was a formidable political machine.

The **Observer's** cartoonist cleverly caricatures the shenanigans by which the pro-Cory NAMFREL and COMELEC's Felipe nearly kept Enrile from winning the 24th (and last) seat in the Senate.

Enemies to Left and Right



The Opposition GAD's demonstration against cheating at the May 1987 polls brought a quarter million protesters to the site of the February 1986 Revolution.

...and set off a panic at Malacañang, which phoned the U.S. Embassy for assistance.



With Ambassador Bosworth at George Washington Ball in 1987, three months after author's last Cassandra Commentary.



Government Mouthpieces



The issue of Land Reform had been hopelessly degraded by the government's demagoguery in the person of Alvarez, who promised so much and could deliver so little, relying on gimmicks such as a **Meralco** 60 hectare donation to land reform to demonstrate Cory's devotion to the policy.



Joker's close rival for least-liked Cabinet member was Teodoro Locsin, Jr. here exhibiting the government's typical smug arrogance at a board meeting of San Miguel. Its emasculated Board Chairman Andres Soriano III is at upper right.



Rudy Sacdalan of the **Chronicle** preserved Teddy Boy's dirty finger for posterity.

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

advisers, whose strength derived entirely from her popularity and patronage. Nonetheless, the pro-Communists carried on their struggle against the AFP without respite, while the Government, subjected the soldiers to re-indoctrination in a campaign that they outrageously called “defascistification.” In other words, whoever had Marcos sympathies was a Fascist. The epithet was almost unknown in the Philippines; a palpable borrowing from the European Communists. It sounded like an importation of Father (!) Jalandoni’s, now reportedly a citizen of the Netherlands. Ninotchka (!) Rosca, now (since Hernando Abaya’s return to the Philippines) the resident Leftist Filipino writer in New York literary world, also showed up to do interviews with the incarcerated NPA *supremo* Rodolfo Salas and General Iletto in which she predictably portrayed Salas as a hero and Iletto as a genial Neanderthal. No one called attention to Ninotchka’s political antecedents or objectives.

On June 13, U. S. Secretary Schultz arrived, bringing a welcome \$163 million in economic aid and regretting the failure of the U. S. Congress to approve requested additional military assistance. The same day, the *Manila Times* exaggeratedly headlined President Aquino’s instruction to combat the urban terrorists as declaring “all-out war.” It appeared that Cory, kicking and screaming, had been dragged (over Arroyo’s struggling body) into a declaration of hostilities by the continuing murder of Manila lawmen. On the same day, Tatad wrote, bitterly but without exaggeration, in the *Observer*:

More and more people are scandalized and embittered by Mrs. Aquino’s remarkable solicitude for Commander Dante after he had escaped ambush and her complete indifference to the brutal slaying and maiming of so many police and military officers and civilians by Sparrow units of the NPA.

Rene Espina, the ex-future senator from Cebu, is one of those who point out that whereas the President’s heart seems to bleed quite spontaneously and profusely for the former NPA head, the death and injuries sustained by her own men in the police and military have failed to move her to express any sorrow or sympathy.

In the last few days, Sparrow units have killed quite a number in the city. Every single one of these murders has made the headlines, but not a word has been heard from the regime. . .

By contrast, Mrs. Aquino had gone out of her way to order special care for Dante. Not only did she telephone to express her concern, she also sent fruits, offered to visit him personally . . . and asked the director of the Philippine Heart Center for Asia to look after him with utmost delicacy.

The Adoration of Cory Aquino

Secretary of State Schultz’ behavior during his June visit to Manila was unprecedented in the history of American diplomacy—at points so suggestive of the veneration of a religious icon as to cast doubts on his psychological equilibrium. The enthusiasm of his pro-Cory statements could only be compared to vice President George Bush’s *gaffe* assuring President Marcos in 1981 that

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

"we love you for your devotion to democracy." As columnist Luis Teodoro expressed it in eccentric but expressive language, Secretary Schultz "had the most superlatives to ever be addressed to any head of state since Peter the Great." Combined with Schultz' undignified appearance at his meeting with President Aquino while wearing a "Cory doll" in his lapel, it made some wonder whether the Secretary had taken leave of his senses. Besides endorsing President Aquino's wildly inaccurate statement that the election had been the cleanest and most honest in history, and that her demonstrably ineffective counter-insurgency policies had been correct, the Secretary, in a groveling toast, literally fawned on the President:

I know there are rumors that there is a soft spot in my heart for President Aquino. . . "What they say is fair. The rumors are true. Fortunately, my wife, Abbie, understands this because she has a soft spot, too, for the President."

Outside the magic and beguiling presence of the President, Secretary Schultz talked rather tough, insisting that money paid to the Philippines for use of the military bases was not rent but aid. When he allegedly "summoned" newly elected legislators to a conference which some invitees, including Ponce Enrile, rejected as an impertinence, he provoked a storm of protest from the press as humiliating to the Filipinos.

What seemed to be the alternately obsequious and peremptory behavior of Secretary of State Schultz, followed a few weeks later by the condescension displayed by U. S. Congressman Stephen Solarz' language and gestures together created a spectacle for which it was difficult to find a precedent in the annals of U. S. international relations. When not resembling the adoration of a Saint, it resembled a game called *The President* in which the jackpot is called "The Nobel Prize." The Secretary of State wore a Cory doll on his lapel, praised her government as a triumph of democracy, and lifted his arms in a *salaam*; Solarz almost patted the President of the Philippines on the head. As Amante Bigornia of the *Manila Times* wrote in indignation, the picture of Solarz "shaking hands with the President, his left hand patting . . . the right shoulder as one would do to a subordinate for a job well done" was an insulting gesture.

The Land Reform Fiasco

President Aquino also reaped the whirlwind sown by her administration's demagoguery on the subject of land reform. This symbolically important and politically valuable reform measure had been exploited by Heherson Alvarez, who debauched both the issue and the Department of Agrarian Reform in his campaign for the Senate. Though Cory had appointed a committee of experts to draft a sensible policy, their recommendations were at once buried in the controversy spawned by Alvarez' demagoguery and Cory's image-builders, interested far less in the reform than its potential for promoting Cory's campaign for the Nobel Prize. When it became obvious to all, Cory admirers as well as opponents, that the government was clearly incapable, financially or politically, of carrying

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

through a major land reform, the matter degenerated into a battle royal between radical peasants, vexed technocrats, furious landowners and fearful bankers, which foretold disaster whether the President should decree land reform (good for her image, especially abroad) or leave it to the legislators (let them assume responsibility for its predestined failure). Almost overlooked was what was already known by those (including the author) who had worked on the problems of land reform: that resources (financial, technological, psychological) must match programs (in cost, size, kind, facilities), if any land reform was to be successful. The landowners, nearly all of whom had in the end supported Cory against Marcos, even talked of revolution, and heard themselves lectured for selfishness by a moralizing Arroyo (who had no land to give up). All this could have been avoided but for Alvarez' demagoguery and Locsin's image-building. Mahar Mangahas, the economist in charge of the President's task force, though in the author's opinion, he unwisely yielded to the image-makers by applying the proposed legislation to *all* agricultural lands and products, could have produced a draft in which resources and objectives were in balance.

Cardinal Sin's Infiltrated Church

The extent of Communist infiltration of the Philippine church was long concealed by the popularity and morality of the issues they were promoting—land reform, social welfare, and religious activity (the Basic Christian Communities—the BCC's), which allowed the liberation theologians to carry on their subversion behind a facade of good works. To be sure, there were exposés, like that of Ross Munro in the December 1984 issue of *Commentary* of the BCC's and the TFD's, but the effects of an occasional article were swept away in the flood of counter-propaganda that appeared in the daily and weekly press, supported fanatically by the foreign legions of the Left, particularly in the United States and Australia. Not until the hardliner Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore took action against his Communists in cassocks did a Filipino church exponent speak out. Celso Carunungan, writer and columnist for the *Manila Standard*, and often a Cardinal Sin spokesman, in late June finally blew the whistle, using the events in Singapore as a springboard. He spoke first of the Singapore church leader, Vincent Cheng Kim Chuan:

Cheng, who had studied in the seminary, had received communist encouragement and indoctrination, according to the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, from a trip he made to the Philippines in 1972. Here he met hard-core communists and was said to be inspired by liberation theology and the Church's involvement in politics.

The ministry further said that Cheng was thoroughly attracted by the workings of the Communist Party of the Philippines "and its strategy of using Catholic organizations as front groups."

Carunungan continued by quoting from the statement of the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs:

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

"The conspirators copied the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM)'s strategy of exploiting cultural societies, by using drama to radicalize the public." Cheng allegedly arranged for another associate of his, Wong Souk Yee, to go to the Philippines for a drama workshop sponsored by radical groups. [One was headed by Alvarez' wife.] When she returned to Singapore, she organized the Third Drama Group and put up "plays with a social context, related to the present day." Its most popular production was the play *Esperanza*, that dramatized the plight of Filipino maids in Singapore who were abused by their employers.

The columnist next quoted Richard Fisher of the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, who described how the Philippine Communists are assisted financially from abroad:

"... the international aid is channeled to the communists through scores of Philippine 'fronts', including various church groups. . ." So extensive is the infiltration of the Roman Catholic Church that Bishop Francisco Claver recently warned that "NDF-related church people have captured all the links with Catholic overseas groups, communication links, and funding agencies."

According to the National Civic Council in Melbourne, Australia, "the Asian Partnership for Human Development founded by the Australian Catholic Relief Agency has given more than \$71,000 to various Philippine communist fronts over two years. Australia-Asia Worker Links in one year gave \$18,500 to the communist-controlled May First Movement. The union federation, also, has received \$120,000 from the US-based Philippine Workers Support Committee. Altogether the total is probably in the millions, "including an estimated \$500,000 a year from the World Council of Churches alone."

Carunungan then added some disquieting information of his own on infiltration of the Philippine Church:

Right this very moment, there are Catholic schools in Metro Manila which are used by communists for their teach-ins. It is no secret that whenever some top communist leaders are in the Manila area, they stay in one of the better-known Catholic schools.

The Singapore experience should be an eye opener to all the Catholics in our country. Through all these historic years, the Philippines has been exporting Christian missionaries and Truth to other Asian countries. Now, it seems that we are, also, exporting communist practices—and with the help of some church workers, too.

Critics of the Cardinal were not reassured by his statements during and after a July visit to the U.S.S.R., in which he said he found no discrimination against the church in Russia and that he had never been treated with such magnificent hospitality. He even credited himself with strengthening the religious sentiments of Lithuanians after a visit to Lithuania, apparently unaware that the bulk of the Lithuanian population had long been dispersed to Siberia.

Renewed Corruption

The resurging tide of corruption, which in the end has brought down every Philippine government except Magsaysay's, had by July long been visible even to

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

the President's supporters. The acceptance, by Supreme Court members, on memorandum receipts, of several Mercedes Benz luxury cars confiscated from former Marcos cronies or Cabinet ministers, caused particular indignation. Already, on March 26, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* had discovered much cronyism in the Aquino government; listing twelve *parientes* "in-or near-government", while Philippine Constabulary Chief Renato de Villa writing to the President on February 11 had pointed out that many of the newly-appointed local officials had re-established rackets in the provinces. President Aquino periodically rejected such accusations, saying that others might steal, but never *her* officials. The *Manila Times* on June 28 delivered a blistering indictment, of which the following excerpts are typical. Under the headlines "*What can Cory do? How About her kin?*" Manny Martinez, the head of its "investigative team," charged:

The top-level cleanup of the judiciary, the Commission on Elections and the military, and of such key outposts of thievery as the Department of Public Works and the bureaus of immigration, customs and internal revenue, has not created the impression that much has changed.

One reason in that Cory has tolerated suspicious contracts, such as the horrendous P500-million arrastre deal by the Philippine Ports Authority, and the appointment as local officer-in-charge of persons of shady names.

Martinez lamented the lack of *delicadeza* manifested by some of the President's *parientes*, as well as her failure to live up to Magsaysay standards, which not only proscribed, but punished, nepotism in all its forms. He dismissed the argument that she had to accommodate her political creditors, taunting her with her failures to go after graft:

What happened to Cory's graft-busting body headed formerly by Sen. Rene Saguisag? . . . Like an unborn child aborted by disinterest, it is now in limbo, awaiting Malacañang's benign hand in bringing it to life.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government is interested mainly in delving into past loot, rather than watching for present and future ones. How can it inspire good government if it has appropriated for its people certain amenities and salaries not expected of them? [A reference to the Mercedes Benzes]. . .

Police officers right in front of Malacañang pocket as low as five pesos from erring taxi drivers. Overpricing has been discovered even with such petty items as stationery and paper clips, while with multimillion-peso projects, the fad is now to underbuild construction, resulting in hefty but ill-gotten profit margins.

Finally, the inquisitorial Martinez turned his attention to the behavior of the discredited COMELEC:

Although they no longer sell protest cases in the Comelec as during the time of Marcos (from P200,000 to P1.5 million, depending on the capacity of the litigants), fulminations have exploded about certain candidates having boxes of extra official ballots in their hands during the last elections.

If true, this is one of the worst acts of cheating ever. Not even Marcos was enamored with it. And massive votebuying has ensured the installation of

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

congressmen who will recoup their expenses and wolf down wealth in a new bacchanalia of graft.

Recovering the Marcos Loot

There was great rejoicing when on July first, word was flashed from Switzerland that the Swiss Supreme Court, breaking precedent and the Swiss tradition of banking secrecy, ordered Swiss banks to reveal Marcos' (already frozen) assets in the Swiss banks, which the Aquino administration has at various times estimated at sums varying from a believable \$1.5 billion to an incredible \$30 billion. This issue, which ex-P.C.G.G. Commissioner Jovito Salonga had demagogically ridden to top the polls (in some districts getting over 160% of the vote!) he sloughed off in good time to avoid any embarrassing confrontations that might weaken his Senatorial campaign or his projected run for the Presidency in 1992. Joy soon gave way to worry, as the ex-President's legal counsel in the Philippines pointed out that a conviction on criminal charges in the home country was a prerequisite for recovering the plunder, and that Marcos could not be convicted *in absentia*. The Administration, however, was afraid to permit Marcos to return, and there was good reason for their fears. The ex-President is wholly discredited, but there is fierce loyalty among his tribal kinsmen, the Ilocanos, as well as among large numbers in the armed forces, which includes a large Ilocano element. These loyalties might not be dangerous if it were not for the failure of the administration (a) to effect a policy of reconciliation with those forces and the officials and leaders of the former administration, (b) the general fecklessness and vacillations of the Aquino government, and (c) its failure either to deal with the Communist insurgency or to bring recovery to the economy. In the government's feverish concern first to assure, and then to batten off Cory Aquino's personal popularity, it has been pre-1972 politics as usual ever since the Revolution—something that was tolerable in past years where there was some momentum in both the polity and the economy, a momentum which has been absent since the revolution. Thus on the eve of the good news from Switzerland, there were published several pessimistic analyses of both the political and economic situations. On July first, in adjacent columns published in the *Manila Times*, Amante Bigornia and Hector Villanueva commented dispiritedly on developments. Bigornia wrote:

The President, in the more than one year that she had been at the helm of government, has not exhibited a full grasp of what is transpiring all around her. . .

Neither has the President displayed the qualities expected of a leader of a nation buffeted by daunting problems such as the very serious communist insurgency and a secessionist movement. She might be the rallying point, but she does not have the political savvy nor the statesmanship to take advantage of the tremendous power offered her.

Villanueva, for his part, argued for stronger government in the face of a still

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

corrupt political culture:

Today, we are concerned that President Aquino failed to utilize her vast discretionary powers in 1986 to effect fundamental economic and political reforms.

Her own exemplary personal conduct and the message of the EDSA Revolution have apparently not changed the Filipino psyche, culture and outlook. To continually blame Marcos for these anxieties will not solve the problems.

If the initial behavioral pattern of the senators and congressmen is to be the gauge, the essence of leadership will be lost and, hopefully not, usher in a more prolonged and repressive dictatorship that we will all regret for a long time.

In the *Independent*, Jerry Barican, former youth activist, wrote that the government's program of privatization, which was a key element in its campaign for foreign investment, had been brought to a halt by vested interests:

A year and a half after the revolution we have a huge gap between promise and reality. That is a polite way of saying government isn't keeping its promises. The pledges to get government out of business are being sabotaged by incompetence, mired in bureaucratic in-fighting, and smothered by appointees anxious to keep their plush offices, titles, and salaries. . .

The government is not only losing time and opportunity for the country by the way it has handled divestment, it has also lost credibility, which is difficult to replace.

The Abolition of Philippine-American Friendship Day

A week before July 4, President Aquino abolished Philippine-American Friendship Day as an official holiday, saying she saw no need for a special day to promote such friendship. She was of course quite right, just as President Macapagal had been right in changing the Philippine national holiday from July 4 when Philippine independence was restored in 1946 to June 12, when it had been proclaimed in 1898. The problem in each instance was that the declaration had the symbolic effect of a gratuitous slap in Uncle Sam's face. In the case of the Aquino pronouncement, it was followed by a barrage of anti-American newspaper stories, and even a pair of nuisance bombings at the (ex-American) International School and the Thomas Jefferson Cultural Center. The total effect was to suggest that if the early pattern of the first days after abolition of Philippine American Friendship Day should be followed subsequently (it was not), July 4 might better be called Hate America Day. All of the old grievances, legitimate and illegitimate, were dug up and lovingly refurbished, accompanied by the fabrication of new historical inaccuracies, all in the name of nationalism. The New Congress was deeply divided on all substantive issue, but its members could agree that now was the season to bash the Americans. The reason for the outburst in the press, of course, was less dissatisfaction with the Americans than the failure of the new regime to bring improvements to the country, and the

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

most vicious commentaries appeared in the newspapers most closely identified with the Cory government. Not even the groveling attitudes struck by the representatives of the U.S. government could appease them. U.S. charge d'affairs Philip Kaplan's July 4 message to the Embassy staff continued the bootlicking of the new avatar of democracy: "... bonds are stronger now than in the past because of the restoration of Philippine democracy. . . [this] marvelous political achievement in the Philippines. . ." This of course was pious poppycock. The President's strongest supporters in the new Congress—Salonga, Guingona, Tañada in the Senate, and Mitra in the House were also passionate anti-Americans.

Opera Comique in Honolulu

On July 10, in Honolulu, ex-President Marcos was solemnly waited upon by a delegation of U.S. government officials and ordered to desist from what they called his destabilization activities aimed at the Aquino government. A tape recording, in which he discussed a fantastic plan to kidnap President Aquino and overthrow her government by the use of massive armaments purchased from known arm dealers, produced this impressive *demarche*. Marcos may or may not have contemplated some kind of plot, but the more significant thing about the episode was the panic caused in both Washington and Manila by the story of such a bizarre adventure. It was a painful acknowledgment in both capitals of the weakness of the Aquino government. The Leftist but often acute Armando Doronila of the Manila *Chronicle* called the whole affair a U.S. government maneuver to keep the Cory government supinely dependent on American support, thus remaining in a position to secure its objectives—bases and favors—in the Philippines. Though she now had a new Congress which was wholly dominated by her supporters, and the U.S. government was ready to rush to her support, the President still feared her discredited predecessor. That not only would the Aquino government refuse to allow Marcos to return to face criminal charges—without which his alleged Swiss billions were probably beyond her government's reach—but that even so fantastically-scripted a tale could cause a mild panic was clear evidence that President Aquino's popularity concealed widely-perceived weaknesses of her government.

The Reconstituted Senate and House

If there were still doubters in May that politics in the Philippines had returned to its 1972 traditions, by July the election frauds, the intrigues, bribery and wild scramble for preferment that attended the selection of Senate President, House Speaker and other Congressional posts should have set them right. Even the Palace's palpable intervention, after repeated pledges to abstain from influencing selections, was a replica of Malacañang under Marcos. In fact, the jockeying and its "*envelopmental*" measures were uncannily reminiscent of the distribution of envelopes by the Palace to certain members of the Constitutional Convention of

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

1971. The principal differences in 1987 were that journalists rather than a members of the Convention blew the whistle. Two *Manila Times* editorial personnel reported that envelopes containing P2000 and P4500 had been offered to them by a p.r. representative of a President's *pariente*. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Macapagal had also been personally honest, but his administration was nonetheless beholden to smugglers and fast-buck artists. The Philippine political culture had not been altered a particle by either Cory's personal honesty or her prayers.

Many of the columnists were broken-hearted. We select two: The Leftist-oriented, pro-Aquino Paulynn Sicam, lamenting the ungrounded optimism of a *balikbayan* who had uprooted his family from the United States in order to do his part in a revitalized Philippines, wrote:

His homecoming 17 months into the Aquino presidency coincides with our entry into collective fits of depression over how things have remained the same. The past elections, we now painfully admit, were dirty. The elected legislature is no different from the old. Social justice remains a dream with the Cabinet's watered-down concept of agrarian reform. And peace—political, social, industrial—remains an elusive dream. And so on.

The *Manila Chronicle's* Arlene Babst-Vokey, pro-Aquino and pro-feminist, on July 15 was equally discouraged by Filipino resignation to revived corruption:

Why are Filipinos so cavalier about graft and corruption? Why do we accept it, tolerate it, resign ourselves to it, as if graft and corruption were as much an intrinsic part of our landscape as the sunset on Manila Bay? Why do we regard graft and corruption as if it were an inherent characteristic of being Filipino?

She challenged the new regime to cast aside old vices:

We must learn to confront these people, no matter who they are, even if they are old friends or relatives. Through our current sense of *deja vu*, we are not only seeing once again, if in diminished quantity, the corruption that we experienced before.

We are also reliving our failure of courage. That is why Marcos lasted all those years.

And that is why his successors are as brazen and victorious as they are today.

Yet another critic, Cynthia Sycip of the *Manila Times*, one of the few of her sex prepared to say a good word for Enrile, pointed to the arrogance of Cory's Senators, *ang mga tuta ni Tita*,⁸⁴ finding them either Satanic or devilish—labels which she said Senator Pimentel had applied to Enrile—and found they might better be applied to the Senator himself:

When an administration senator blatantly interferes with an independent body, like the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and threatens the commissioners with the denial of their reappointments if they did not change their

⁸⁴ "Aunt (Cory's) lapdogs"

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

decisions on a certain petition filed by a senatorial candidate, then he is acting like the devil. Now, tell us who is this devil?

When the same administration senator uses his special "voodoo" to persuade the poll body to proclaim a candidate from his region prematurely because of the candidates lead of less than a 2,000 votes, he is acting like the devil.

Another administration senator talks like the devil when he blatantly tells a reporter, "you see, we can stand Enrile angry for about two or three months but not for six years."

What do you think of this senator who tells a friend: "Tell Enrile I will talk to Monching Felipe (of the Electoral Commission)."

And how do you call a lady senator-elect who takes her oath of office hurriedly on a Sunday afternoon at a Makati restaurant, and her oath is administered by another senator from her region because no member of the Supreme Court possesses the gall to go through a fraudulent rite?

Senator Helms Endorses the GAD Electoral Fraud Case

In the weeks immediately preceding the assembly of the Congress on July 27, public morale plunged deeper into pessimism. It required heroic hyperbole on the part of the American Embassy to assert that ties between America and the Philippines had been strengthened by the democracy over which Mrs. Aquino presided,—the democracy which had stolen from 6 to 8 Senate seats, and was making every effort to deprive Enrile of even seat #24 in the Senate. When the GAD White Paper on the election reached the United States, it awakened criticism, but mostly on the part of the political Right. Senator Jesse Helms at a seminar attacked what he called a CIA/State Department plot that had replaced Marcos with Mrs. Aquino. Helms and other speakers at the seminar such as Joe Rogers, former U.S. Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank, along with Francisco Tatad and Homobono Adaza, both defeated GAD candidates, made a serious tactical error in associating their legitimate objections to the election frauds and course of Aquino government policies with the past and future of the discredited Mr. Marcos.

The Embassy and the U. S. Bases

In a major policy speech that had to have had State Department approval, *chargé d'affaires* Philip Kaplan on July 29 pointed out that the demand of neophyte Philippine Congressmen that the United States pay rent for the bases at a fixed figure not subject to U.S. Congressional review would violate the U.S. Constitution. Still, he assured his listeners at the Makati Business Club that the U.S. was "determined to renegotiate a fair and reliable agreement that will provide an appropriate flow of funds" to the Philippines. In the process, Kaplan did not neglect to take a left-handed swipe at U.S. Senator Helms (whose objections had been holding up the appointment of Nicholas Platt, named by President Reagan to succeed Bosworth). Kaplan's smarmy reassurances included

The Second Cabinet and the May 1987 Elections

the statement that there might be "one or two Senators who would not be as generous as the rest of us." Though he made the ritualistic disclaimers that the U.S. was trying to influence the Philippines on the subject of the bases ("If you want us out, we'll go"), Chargé Kaplan seemed confident that the U.S. had private reassurances that they could remain. He denounced extremists "who seek to divide our nations." They would not succeed, he said, because the Philippines and the U.S. had "grown closer and more trusting with the advent of your new democracy." He also reassured his listeners that the U.S. would keep President Marcos "in his box":

We consult your government at the appropriate level on all matters related to Mr. Marcos. There is nothing we know that your Government does not know, and that's the way its gonna stay. Marcos will continue to enjoy the pleasures of Waikiki.

The Assassination of Jaime Ferrer

The murder of Minister of Local Government Jaime Ferrer on August 2 brought bitter denunciation of Mrs. Aquino's government, but even that horror failed to burst through the bubble of pious and reverent regard for President Aquino herself and break the spell that still protected her from any personal responsibility for the vulnerabilities and deficiencies of her government. One of her enthusiastic supporters, Petronilo Daroy, writing in the *Manila Chronicle* under the caption "Government is Unable to Rule" on the following day, still robed her with the cloak of untouchability despite what he called her failed government:

The people cannot be accused of not trying to abort the drift. They accepted the claim to legitimacy of the Aquino Administration, despite ambiguities in the manner in which it captured power. They in fact cooperated by ratifying a constitution whose imperfections were glaringly obvious—from the composition of its framers to the finished document itself. And they trooped to the polls to elect their legislators.

It is Government that has been consistently deficient.

If failed to contain the initial disobedience of the Marcos loyalists. When the Constitution was written, it legitimized actions which tended to nullify specific provisions. It failed to return property confiscated by the previous regime and even continued to appropriate such property for its own uses. And in the elections, the electoral body proved itself alternately negligent, incompetent and indifferent.

No matter what is said of the Ferrer ambush, all the rhetoric—of "going after destabilization forces of the Left and Right," of "getting to the bottom of this, no matter the political cost"—will continue to remind us of previous cases that remain unsolved.

Still, only days before the latest assassination, yet another international award was bestowed on the President. Jane Mason, president of the International Women's Forum, handed her the Steuben Crystal Eagle as its awardee of the

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

year in the presence of a simpering Philip Kaplan and Philippine Ambassador to the U.S., Emmanuel Pelaez. When Cory predictably responded to the latest murder with a pious homily joined to an attack on Marcos, there was outrage in many quarters but public silence. Replying to comparisons with more satisfactory peace and order conditions under Marcos, she admitted that there were no assassinations under the (Marcos) dictatorship, but “perhaps it is not abuse but decency that is mistaken for weakness.” Hardly reassuringly, she vowed to “fight anarchy with law and murder with peace.” How much comfort Ferrer’s family and those of other prospective victims could take in her piety was problematical, but perhaps the members of the Nobel Prize Awards Committee were listening.

Chapter X

ANOTHER CABINET REORGANIZATION AND THE HONASAN PUTSCH

President Aquino's State of the Nation Message

President Aquino's State of the Nation Address delivered on August 10, was a minor disaster, the President announcing few programs⁸⁵ and complaining bitterly that the Philippines' creditors had dealt harshly with her country. In so doing, she harvested a chorus of approval from the ultra-nationalists and her *tutas* in the Congress, who howled for debt repudiation and the heads of Central Bank Governor Fernandez and Finance Minister Ongpin, the negotiators of the debt re-structuring. The President sounded like a petulant schoolgirl who believed she deserved a prize for having led a successful demonstration against a hated school principal and now expected a holiday without homework assignments. Encouraging the demand for debt repudiation was the worst possible Presidential tactic. She had presented the wild men in the Congress with a platform that they could not have mounted by themselves.

Enrile Redivivus

After weeks of palpable chicanery at the Commission on Elections intended to deprive Enrile of a place in the Senate, the Supreme Court on August 13 took the matter out of the hands of the by now totally discredited COMELEC by responding favorably to an Enrile petition requesting his proclamation as 24th Senator. Cory was visibly angry and disappointed that the man whom she properly identified as her foremost opponent should have been rescued by *her* Court. Though she had appointed them all, only Justice Sarmiento, the most partisan of the Cory court, objected to the decision! Before the T. V. cameras, President Aquino found it possible only to say, between clenched teeth, that the Supreme Court had spoken the final word. Pro-Enrile demonstrations then broke out when Enrile appeared before Supreme Court Chief Justice Teehankee to take his oath. Elsewhere in Manila he was also cheered in various public places, many participants commenting that they welcomed his proclamation even though they had not voted for him, since they were sure he had won. Ovations aside, the practical result seemed minimal. President Aquino's Oppo-

⁸⁵ Cory had apparently inherited one political preference (don't commit yourself) from Ninoy. In Arnold Zeitlin's opinion, they both preferred improvisation: "She really never has a program beyond normality—restoring republican government. That's her inheritance from her husband. He never had a program either. In his restless, incandescent brilliance, Ninoy believed that if he ever achieved power, he would rule off the top of his head.

'They're not going to pin me down,' he once said angrily about others urging him to write a program." *Journal of Commerce*, August 18, 1987.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

sition in the Senate had been increased by only one, leaving the count as 22 pro-Cory Senators facing two lonely Oppositionists, one of whom, the film star Estrada, seemed out of place.

Effects of Enrile's Proclamation

In Tony Gatmaitan's clever phrase, when Enrile was proclaimed Senator in August 1987, he became a majority of one. Spelling out his reasoning, the Manila *Standard* columnist went on to make a convincing case for *Enrile Redivivus*. First of all, his long battle with the Comelec had appreciably widened Enrile's constituency:

Many were turned off with what they considered a deliberate attempt on the part of the administration to deprive him of a seat in the Senate. The inconsistencies were obvious, and the proclamation of Santanina Rasul only hardened the support in his favor. Suddenly Enrile was the underdog, and the sympathy was profuse. He struck a chord among the people.

Gatmaitan went on to observe that Enrile's elevation in public esteem had coincided with a decline in President Aquino's rating. In addition to landowners and military personnel, with whom she had never been popular, there was disenchantment in the heartland of her constituency—the Makati financial district:

... a day before Enrile's pivotal victory in the courts, 200 Cory supporters, among them the parents of her close kin, expressed their disgust over the way she was running the show and dramatized their protest by burning their yellow T-shirts at the foot of the Aquino shrine on Ugarte Field. The ultimate sacrilege.

"We are sorry we voted for her and we are now disaffiliating ourselves," said an organizer of the rally.

This dissatisfaction assumed greater significance in view of potentially explosive discontent in the Armed Forces. The most portentous development during Cory's first 18 months in office was, in fact, the growth of disillusionment on the part of the several hundred younger AFP officers (centered in the PMA class of 1971) who had been the guiding spirits, under Enrile, of the military mutiny that set off the February 1986 revolution. Some unusually thoughtful newspaper articles discussed this phenomenon. One (8/10/87), by the *Independent's* Jerry Barican, former youth activist, and another, again by Gatmaitan, in the Manila *Standard* (8/12/87) illuminated the problem. Barican stressed the changing social makeup, and hence political philosophy, of the AFP:

As the older officers retire, in accordance with the express policy to phase out extensions of service, a generation of officers who graduated in the late sixties and early seventies will come to military leadership. This is a crucial generation, the counterpart of the politicized students of UP during the same period. It is a generation ironically, despite its desire for a more professionalized armed forces, perhaps the most politically aware and involved of classes in the history of the PMA and the officer corps. This generation saw active service in the Mindanao campaigns and the insurgency. It played a leading role

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan Putsch

in the events that led to EDSA. After some members bout with the perils of public popularity, this generation has retired to the anonymity of routine military service in the second or third echelon of rank. There is some resentment at a civilian government inherently and naturally suspicious of popular men on horseback.

Gatmaitan, referring to a recent episode in which "Gringo" Honasan, one of the RAM heroes in February 1986, was treated like any enemy by the government's surveillance agents, quoted *Times* columnist Cecilio Arillo, a military affairs specialist:

While driving home with his wife one evening, Honasan somehow sensed that he was being watched by a pro. Taking evasive action, he managed to out-manuever and capture his tail who turned out to be someone from a branch of military service. Gringo let the man go and sent him back to his superiors with a message: "Tell them . . . I am not the enemy."

After pointing out that "Someone high up was paranoid," Gatmaitan continued:

According to Arillo, this is a common occurrence. Apparently, the movements of the RAM office who were involved in the February revolt of 1986 are closely monitored by the authorities on a regular basis. Shadows chasing shadows.

The *Standard* columnist went on to pursue the theme of reciprocal dissatisfactions among the AFP, the RAM and Malacañang:

During the time of Marcos, Big Brother was watching Enrile and his boys. "Now it's Big Sister," he [Arillo] said. . .

On the Monday after the killing of Secretary Jaime Ferrer, Speaker Ramon Mitra, Jr. called for the resignation of top PC-INP officials should they fail to come up with results within 30 days.

Chief of Staff General Fidel Ramos quickly took exception to Speaker Mitra's remarks and explained that the military establishment looked at whatever shortcomings they may have as a matter of "command responsibility." He clearly meant that if Congress was dissatisfied with their performance in keeping the peace, President Aquino as the Commander-in-Chief must share in the blame. General Ramos said a mouthful, considering the fact that he has lately steered away from controversy.

Whether these developments, when taken together with the re-establishment of military checkpoints and Ilet's references to the potential value of the suspension of *habeas corpus*, added up to what the thoughtful and subtle editor-in-chief of the *Independent*, Freddie Salanga, called (8/12/87) "a coup in slow motion," was left for the future to reveal. . . How near that future loomed was a surprise to most. It came in the early morning hours of August 28.

Cory's Millionaires and her Employment Policies

At the eighteen-month milestone, one curious feature of President Aquino's government was that although a government of the Left, it was conspicuously unable to do anything to relieve poverty, whether in the rural or urban areas.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

The wealthy, as one of the them, but a Cory critic, put it to the author, "had never had it so good." That this should be so was perhaps explained, if not justified, by the fact that five out of nine of her relatives in the House of Representative alone were "millionaires" (in pesos). It may also reflect the facts that (a) a few of the Leftist elements in the ranks of labor have been checked since Labor Minister Sanchez was eliminated from the Cabinet and (b) that Land Reform, under Cory and Alvarez, became propaganda rather than policy, but the more fundamental reason has been that Mrs. Aquino's most vociferous supporters have always been the wealthy—who first elected her and then themselves to administrative, and subsequently to electoral, positions in her government. It also ignores the fact that despite the Marcos regime's insatiable appetite for plunder, its policies and programs directed substantial income flows to both the urban (WPA-style employment, subsidized rice prices) and rural poor (heavy expenditures for agricultural credit and infrastructure in the provinces).

Aquino's supporters and critics agree that increased employment is the single most important Philippine policy requirement and most of them that investment will make or break any campaign for greater employment. Neither foreign nor domestic investors will put up their money until peace and order improve, but the Human Rights have so far checkmated all moves to strengthen the AFP and the police. For every press story lamenting the tide of criminality, there are protests from the Human Rights against any strengthening of either police or AFP. By its acts of commission and omission, therefore, the Aquino government has chosen ineffective government, and hence unemployment, in the name of human rights, even if for most people, the basic human need is employment.

This paradox of a government of the Left whose policies favor the rich seems attributable to President Aquino's stubborn devotion to contradictory principles: reconciliation with the Communists and the primacy of human rights over peace and order, outweighing a theoretical preference for private enterprise. Pursuing such contradictions, the Communist insurgency was allowed to grow and the criminally inclined were encouraged. Still, international debts were re-structured, a pro-labor Secretary of Labor was dismissed, and strikes for higher wages and improved working conditions were broken up when, infiltrated by radical elements, they turned violent. One result was that the radicals turned to calling strikes with purely political motives. In the countryside, pursuing votes and popularity by reckless references to land reform, President Aquino managed to enlarge expectations but to reduce incomes.

Consequently, when higher oil prices were announced over the August 23 weekend, a general strike (*Welga ng Bayan*) was proclaimed by jeepney drivers and bus operators, supported by consumer groups and students. When President Aquino yielded to the protests, reducing the prices earlier announced, the protestors howled for a total price roll-back and the streets were empty when the military rebels struck the next morning.

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan Putsch

Change of Command at the U. S. Embassy

After U. S. Charge Philip Kaplan, like a lovesick swain, had touchingly bidden farewell to President Aquino at Malacañang ("the best 26 months of my life . . . this country's gonna make it . . . the USA is going to back you all the way"), Ambassador Bosworth's replacement Nicolas Platt arrived on August 23. He presented his credentials to Mrs. Aquino on August 26, expressing pleasure that the Filipino people's confidence in her leadership was strong(!) and pledged continued support for her government. The commentator Gatmaitan, who was leaving the *Standard* for another publication, was unimpressed with the Kaplan reassurances, which he said

. . . only created the opposite of the intended effect. Normally, such observations need not have been made. Something was bothering him.

"Kaplan sounded more like he was addressing the growing number of skeptics in Washington," says a local analyst. "Or he may want to prevent the hawks from pushing the button."

Actually, Kaplan like (because of?) Schultz, was infatuated with Cory, and not averse to making a spectacle of himself. In this soap opera, compounded of several classical romances, which the author has called *The Adoration of Cory Aquino*, Schultz played a King Arthur bewitched by Guenevere and Kaplan Prince Charming to a sleeping (doped by Arroyo?) Princess. . . To such a pass had American diplomacy arrived, driven by its wild pursuit of phantoms in jack-boots while the praying mantis in Malacañang was gorging itself on demon's fare prepared by Arroyo.

On the Eve of the Putsch

In the days just preceding the Honasan *putsch*, Cory's mantle of irreproachability was at long last being rent. Commenting on her survival of the *Welga ng Bayan*, the *Independent's* acute Julie Daza (8/28/87), under the headline "Malacañang Blinked" first acknowledged the lingering evidence of Cory's impregnability:

Perhaps her mother-image saved her. To hit Cory is to assault motherhood, widowhood, womanhood: who dares to be the first to throw stones at her sincerity, her goodness, her fragility? Yes, fragility.

But Julie then ripped away several of the President's protective garments:

That this fragility is not seen as weakness is Cory's great fortune. Mistake after mistake, one faux pas after another, from a simple thing like calling Taiwan the Republic of China to more complicated conundrums such as the Mendiola massacre and now the announcement of an 18 percent increase in oil prices overnight and then backtracking, but only half-way, Cory's government has been plunging headlong into a mine of man-made disasters, in fair weather yet.

The commentator could not resist, in her distress, resorting to sarcasm:

Deliberate or innocent mistakes, their sheer and unmitigated frequency,

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

gives rise to suspicion that it is the policy of government to make the wrong decision the rightful one. Are her advisers afraid of success, the handmaiden of failure, or is it because they cannot believe their luck and must keep trying to invent new mistakes so they can really and truly test their limits, and Cory's popularity?

Finally, Julie turned to the concessions the *welgistas* had forced on the President:

LRT fares have been rolled back, and the National Power Corp. has retreated from a new rate increase. The sun shines for another day. The cloud over Malacañang says it's the monsoon season. The Cory watchers are watching and waiting—for the storm to break? for the silver lining to shine through?

This eerie feeling of things not being what they seem will not go away.

Honasan Strikes

. . . Then, during the early morning hours of August 28, Honasan and his fed-up young officers struck—at Malacañang, where as usual, except for the Presidential Security Guard, there was panic and hysteria, at Camp Aguinaldo, which was seized without difficulty (Mrs. Honasan and Mrs. Kapunan lived there), at Villamor Air Base, which was the scene of an indecisive fire fight, and at three of the T. V. stations, which the mutineers at first took over easily. When Noynoy Aquino, out late at night attending to an undisclosed “personal matter” with Arroyo, returned home, the President's son (as first reported by the Palace) was met by a hail of bullets that wiped out his four security men (one survived a leg amputation) and wounded Noynoy in the arm and nape. Mrs. Aquino's first reaction was hysterical: “The aim of the rebels was clearly to kill the President and her family.” Her statement sounded more like Arroyo than Locsin in its insistence that the rebel soldiers had tried to kill Noynoy “even after he had identified himself.” This charge was of course ridiculous; if the armed men were rebels and had really wanted to kill Noynoy, nothing would have been easier with his security guards all eliminated.

However, when the Presidential Security Guard stood firm, and Ramos and most of the AFP's general officers refused to join in the mutiny, Honasan and several of his top officers slipped away in a helicopter (allegedly supplied by U.S. officers, later identified as U.S. Embassy attaches), subsequently announcing that they were forming a military *junta* which would act as a provisional government in the areas they controlled. Their principal policy proposal was for a new Presidential election “which would be clean and honest.” Recovered from the Palace panic, Presidential spokesman Teddy Benigno tauntingly riposted that this was the talk of a “phantom government.”

President Aquino's #2 adviser and spokesman, Teddie Boy Locsin, at the height of the struggle, made a spectacle of himself and further deepened the split between Malacañang and the armed forces. Before General Ramos and other AFP officers, he charged Ramos with being hesitant and indecisive in meeting

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

the rebel attack, and actually telephoned the Presidential Security Guard to demand they bomb Channel 7, then in the hands of the rebels, thrusting aside objections that this would mean a civilian holocaust. His characteristically arrogant behavior earned Locsin another deluge of media denunciations, and he was required to make a public apology—reportedly his third.

Honasan: Patriot or Traitor?

Probably the most significant thing about the *putsch* was that outside the Palace and the Congress, much sympathy was expressed with its perpetrators. Few approved of the *putsch* itself, but most felt the RAM had been driven to the desperate step. One Ricarte Baliao wrote in the *Standard* that the revolt was an expression of idealism,

a culmination of a long-seething disenchantment in the ranks of a wide segment of the military organization over a number of things they consider amiss in the leadership of the nation and of the armed forces itself.

It is not an attempt at coup d'état in the traditional sense of the word, where those involved in it just want to take political power for power's sake. It would therefore, be a mistake for the civilian government to put a political tag on it.

. . . [It was] not a loyalist, rightist or leftist move. Rather, Honasan said, it is a move of young officers who have taken it upon themselves "to initiate the fight for justice our senior officers failed to do or refused to undertake."

This is obviously an expression of idealistic if quixotic aspirations, and not a convenient cover for inordinate ambition to seize power.

Most of the radio and a few of the T. V. commentators (a frequent division these days) were sympathetic to Honasan's group. Tita Cory's *tutas*, like Locsin, were of course beside themselves with indignation. One of the most prominent, Senator Saguisag, who is already viewed as something of a clown, pulled out all the stops, saying Honasan, with the "blood of both civilians and soldiers on his hands," had "deserted his comrades at the height of the battle":

. . . Gringo left the dying to the men who unwittingly had been dragged into a war with Government, and for a cause he alone understood.

"The Gringo of today is not the Gringo of the other day," Saguisag said. In the public mind, he judged that the difference is "Gringo does not smell like roses anymore."

Saguisag needed a nose job. As usual, he was wrong. Honasan was still a folk hero, as another of Julie Daza's columns witnessed:

Gringo Honasan, wanted by the state.

Also by lots and lots of women who are willing to harbor him in their homes. (Go ahead, conduct your own poll).

He is a traitor, a criminal, a fugitive in the eyes of the law. But it is hard not to empathize with his lost cause.

For many people, only lost causes matter.

His Reform the Armed Forces Movement started out as one but peaked

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

during the EDSA revolution, after which the Honasan clique—Kapunan, Robles, Turingan, Legaspi, Wong et al.—became a cult. They had set the standards for soldiery. With their good looks, gentlemanly behavior and military savvy, they glowed in the limelight of public adulation until they fell from grace with the ouster of their minister of defense.

Everybody loves a winner and nobody loves a loser. The Ramboys were banished, disbanded but not forgotten.

When Gringo hit back with a mutiny that was a daring as it was foolhardy, the question on everyone's lips was not "Why?" but "Where is he?" They understood his reason for the rebellion, but they would wait for a glimpse of him before passing judgment, as if the sight of him would make forgiveness come easy.

If Cory and her Palace retinue were outraged, the Congress was dispirited and humbled. Once again, their proud skills of oratory and wheeling and dealing were rendered mute or ineffective by armed men. The ever-grinning Mitra (who resembles Orson Wells playing alternately Falstaff and Cardinal Wolsey) could not manage a smile, and had to be satisfied with seeing passed a so-called unanimous vote (less than 50 were present) condemning the men who had finally balked at swallowing all that a hostile Malacañang and Congress had given (and not given!) them.

. . . Honasan had not deserted, just regrouped. He called on other young officers scattered over to country to join him, and in response, the PMA cadets first staged a hunger strike and later did whatever they could to show their sympathy for Gringo's gamble without actually making themselves liable to court martial.⁸⁶

Cory Aquino, Recedivist?

After 19th months in power, President Aquino's saintliness had inevitably

⁸⁶ Ted Koppel's *Nightline*, rebroadcast in Manila on September 11, was a shocking misrepresentation of what had transpired two weeks earlier. Throughout, it was an attack on Senator Enrile, whom Koppel said had gone into hiding (which was an outright lie, since he has accepted telephone calls at home) and was responsible for the August 28 mutiny. The broadcast lumped the earlier four mutinies, all but one of which had been caused by the Marcos Loyalists, with Honasan's revolt of August 28, which *Nightline* represented as nothing but a naked and unprovoked grab for power, ignoring the President's manifestations of inveterate hostility toward the military and the long-standing grievances of the armed forces. General Ramos, who had earlier complained of President Aquino's tenderness toward the NPA's, was shown condemning fighting communists "only with guns." Ex-Ambassador Bosworth appeared, denouncing the military and parroting the by now threadbare State Department thesis of the blessed Mrs. Aquino's popularity, her progress in "restoring democracy", and in reviving the economy. Not a word was heard on *Nightline* of the swelling chorus of country-wide dissent from the President, her advisers and her policies. The State Department seemed totally in the hands of ideologues who felt that elections and a free press, no matter to what extent either was tainted, of the restoration of parliament, no matter how nepotistic or corrupt, and a sermonizing President, however ineffectual, constituted the only way out—whether in El Salvador, the Philippines or Korea—for a state under attack by Communist forces.

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

undergone etiolation. No political figure in power can escape such a diminution, as political choices, even by someone who puts popularity above principle, will always disappoint some people. Nonetheless, to her die-hard backers, Cory was still a saint, however shopworn. From her side, there had been no apostasy—she still declared herself a Jeffersonian democrat even as she increasingly behaved like a monarch surrounded by courtiers. What has happened to Mrs. Aquino, we believe, is that the exercise of great power—so insidiously addictive—has worked its inescapable effects on her character, and that these influences have had regressive effects on her personality, reactivating the autocratic instincts of the born *hacendera*. From the tyro in the yellow dress who in the first delirious moments of victory assured vice-President Laurel that she “only wanted to topple Marcos; you’ll be the Prime Minister,” her successive steps—to establish a Revolutionary Government, to exclude from decision-making all but herself and her closest advisers in her closet cabinet—Enrile, Ramos, Ongpin, Father Bernas and Arroyo—she first eliminated Enrile on the advice of Bernas and Arroyo, next Bernas at Arroyo’s urging. Successive hard decisions wrung from her torrents of tears shed in the presence of her confessors and the nuns, her sisters in faith, but the failure of those she dispossessed to resist strengthened her conviction, originally born of the February Revolution, that she was divinely inspired. Like most such figures (one thinks of John Brown as well as Joan of Arc), the very criticisms of those identified (by the ever-closer Arroyo⁸⁷)

⁸⁷ The relationship of Cory Aquino to her executive Secretary, Joker Arroyo, has inspired much lively private discussion and analysis, which, distilled, amounts to a judgment that in addition to his role as policy adviser, Joker has served Cory both as security blanket and lightning rod—comforting her and shielding her from criticism. Inevitably, this suggests certain historical parallels: one thinks of Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex, as well as Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Elizabeth was also fond of adulation and jealously possessive, while Victoria eventually came wholly under Albert’s influence. However, Albert was deeply Conservative, rather than a radical political sympathizer like Joker. References to Arroyo as Cory’s Rasputin, of course, are journalistic melodrama, but they do capture the thought that the intimate adviser exercised a baleful, unwholesome influence over the sovereign. To Joker’s enemies, however—and they were legion—we must turn rather to Shakespeare’s *Iago* for a role model. One scholar eloquently characterized *Iago* as possessing “energy, insight, subtlety, courage and self-control,” which to do him justice, accurately portrays Joker’s assets. In *Iago*’s case, these impressive talents were employed for the treacherous destruction of his superior Othello. The scholar explains how:

At its best, *Iago*’s technique of deception is virtually immune to exposure. Since he is known to be honest, he is never disbelieved; since he is known to be trustworthy, everyone confides in him; since he is known to be loyal, he is never suspected. His most damaging admissions seem to be wrung from him against his will, and his most villainous pieces of advice seem to be the wise counsels of a sympathetic friend.*

The number of Arroyo’s enemies of course, invalidates the application of this example to Joker, but it comes close to describing the Human Righters and President Aquino’s own faith in her counselor and *confidante*.

* R. V. Lindaburg, Associate Editor of *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Vol. X.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

as enemies, particularly the military, strengthened her convictions—or paranoia.

Cory's impressive electoral victory in the Constitutional plebiscite confirmed her belief that she was in fact a Philippine Joan of Arc, and that her acts now had not only divine but secular sanction. In private, she angrily denounced one of her victorious Senatorial candidates, high on the Cardinal's list, as an ingrate when he differed with her on a policy matter, as well as the Supreme Court (every member of which she had appointed!), when it insisted on seating her enemy Enrile as Senator. Efforts to move Arroyo (whose proximity and sympathy were transforming him into a kind of Prince Consort), out of her immediate presence made her only more stubbornly insistent on her (his?) views. Cory's hate list was growing, and her insistence on increased prerogatives grew more visible by the week, as her favorites—the Prince Consort, her Court Jester Saguisag in the Senate and her Palace Knight, the Duke of Pasay Road—became more arrogant. Then, when General Ramos not only defeated but reviled Gringo Honasan, who had so manfully helped mount the Revolution which brought both Mrs. Aquino and him to power, but then dared to advocate its return to the terms of its original mandate, Ramos was rewarded with probationary status as a member of the Palace *Junta*.

The Staggering Aquino Government

The Honasan *putsch* was an expression of unbridgeable differences between Malacañang and its Congressional supporters on the one hand and the armed forces on the other, just as the *Welga ng Bayan* (general strike) signified a break between Malacañang and its Congress with the working public at large. Short of heroic (and unlikely) measures on the part of the constitutional authorities, liberal government in the Philippines was dead. . . So, in a conversation with the author, judged one of the most knowledgeable and talented Filipino political analysts just after Honasan's failed bid for power had exposed the Aquino government's fatal weaknesses. These included President Aquino's own flaws of character, personified by her tears and attacks of hysteria, and her absorption in the pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize, as well as her growing *hacendera*-like arrogance, the intrigues of those who in effect exercised power from behind her skirts, the maddening recrudescence of the traditional failings of the political culture—*parientes*, cronies and bribery—which had grown so monstrously in the waning years of the Marcos regime, and her administration's total failure to deal effectively either with poverty or the armed insurrections by Communists, Muslims and separatists. It seemed only a matter of time before it was finished off by its enemies, unless the United States was prepared once again to intervene massively—not just with funds and clandestine support for Cory Aquino as a candidate, but to keep her widely-discredited government in power in order to avoid its replacement by some totalitarian regime.

To the author, it is unmistakably clear that both President Aquino *and* her advisers (not they alone) have been responsible for a policy of ignoring or

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

temporizing with domestic policy issues in the belief that repeated acclamations of public support for a mythic figure fabricated by artificers justified a government of play-acting. Her government has been one of theatre, of spectacle, which at first inspired and then for some time entertained, but did not govern, as it shirked all serious decisions. In the end, Cory may get her Nobel peace prize at the cost of a prostrate country left open to seizure by the Communists or nationally fragmented, in the hands of regional warlords.

Cabinet Reorganization: A Last Chance?

The author is obliged to remind not only his readers, but himself, that while the Philippines has frequently appeared to totter on the edge of total collapse, it has so far always managed to stave off destruction. Commentator after commentator has called attention to the national genius for survival, for somehow—many call it miraculously—staggering along and prolonging its life. The caption above is therefore a concession to general perception rather than a prediction. When the repercussions from Honasan's failed *putsch* at long last finally compelled President Aquino to distance herself from her most unpopular advisers and once more to reorganize her Cabinet, Mrs. Aquino took her first real step from religious mystic to practical politician, and to democracy as it is, rather than democracy as ideology and precept. Just as important as the decision on Cabinet reorganization was her cancellation of a scheduled visit to Rome on October 18 to attend the solemnities when the first Filipino saint, Lorenzo Ruiz, would be canonized. Significantly, this also represented a decision that her campaign for the Nobel Prize would probably be better served by staying home to help rebuild her shattered polity than by strengthening any claim to sainthood by sharing it with a long-dead martyr. Whether she realized it or not, it was also a sign that Ninoy Aquino was being remembered for his pronouncement that the Philippines was worth dying [and working] for, as well as praying for. The *Chronicle's* Amando Doronila approvingly contrasted her new attitudes with the old:

. . . neither historical evidence nor wise counsel had persuaded her to cancel her visits [abroad]. She had uncritical belief that Providence was on her side and that it was fated that her Government should fall in her absence, so be it. Charge it to the will of God.

. . . [Her] stubborn attitude derived from the blind faith in miracles to which she and many of her followers attributed the success of the EDSA uprising.

Doronila, who a day earlier had called Arroyo and Locsin “political albatrosses,” was hopeful that President Aquino was at last demonstrating some evidence of political maturity and wisdom:

She has now come to grips with the reality that if another coup strikes while she is away, it is possible that she will lose her presidency. Even in her presence last August 28, she nearly lost power mainly because of the uncer-

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

tainty of the loyalty of the troops during the crucial hours of the coup.

She may now have come around to the view that maybe miracles do not always happen and it would be abusing the generosity of Divine Providence to be asking it to intervene in her favor every time she is in crisis—even if the crisis is a result of her own muddled and confused leadership.

Only after immense pressure by the anti-Arroyo and anti-Locsin forces in the business community and the media to dismiss these advisers did Mrs. Aquino yield. One of her strongest supporters, the *Manila Times*, wrote on September 4, below a cartoon which showed her alone in an empty room staring disconsolately out of a window:

It is said that the presidency is one of the loneliest jobs. As head of state and government, the President must be ever ready to forsake even her closest advisers, relatives and friends. She must not hesitate to make certain decisions and take certain steps, however painful and unpalatable and even unseemly these may be to her. She may even have to sacrifice everything—family, friends, popularity—just to be able to do what is right according to her solemn oath.

U. S. Embassy “Caught Flat-Footed”?

Without access to the official telegraph traffic, there is no way definitively to determine whether the Embassy was, or was not, caught napping when Gringo struck. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (9/10/87) thought it was:

Few diplomatic assignments could start as disconcertingly as that of Nicholas Platt, Washington's new chief envoy to the Philippines. Barely 36 hours after presenting his credentials to President Corazon Aquino, a violent show-of-force by military dissidents caught the president, Platt and most of their advisers totally off-guard.

The author, who these days makes very little effort to be informed of coming events, nonetheless knew that a revolt by junior AFP officers, fed up with the unfriendliness and indecisiveness of the Aquino government, was in the air. The *Independent*, which had written of a “coup in slow motion”, was in touch with AFP members sympathetic to the mutiny. It seems likely that not only the unfamiliarity of Ambassador Platt and his Deputy Kenneth Quinn with their new assignment, but the infatuation for President Aquino of outgoing DCM Philip Kaplan (who departed on August 29, the day after the revolt) may have hindered or blunted the receipt of intelligence of a lurking anti-Aquino revolt.

The *FEER* went on to analyze, we think correctly, what Kaplan (and probably Ambassador Bosworth before his departure) had ignored or down-graded:

The basic lesson is this: despite the niceties of constitutional consolidation and other signs of political and economic progress, the cycle of open military revolt against Aquino's 18-month-old government has intensified, not diminished.

The second lesson is even harder to swallow: there may be no way out of this cyclical dilemma except a major reshuffle within Aquino's government—whether she likes it or not.

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

Later in the article, the magazine listed other criticisms of the government. It pointed out, however, that by the peculiar rules of the Philippine political culture, the characteristic unwillingness of Filipinos to force things to a showdown would undoubtedly prevail:

The most immediate effect of the violent military defiance was to expose, once again, the glaring disarray within the AFP. Although the affair remains essentially directed at winning support from within the AFP itself, Honasan's move revealed government flat-footedness, isolation and impotence.

The damage to the government's credibility is beginning to show. As with the lengthening lists of "unsolved" political killings, the tally of wrist-slapped military dissidents has become embarrassingly long. Although on 28 August a visibly shaken Aquino said she would give "no terms" to "these traitors", to whom she "had nothing to say," few expect her threats of stern retribution to be carried out. Much-publicised threats to have Honasan "shot on sight" were retracted. Negotiations, despite the president's talk of "no terms," have begun.

Updating the Philippine Commission on Good Government

In its next issue (September 17), the *Far Eastern Economic Review* did a cover story on the Philippines which focussed on the performance of the P.C.G.G., rendering what amounted to a mixed verdict. First it offered its own overall judgment on the current level and loci of corruption:

One of the accusations leveled at the Philippine Government by the latest military mutineers in a "manifesto" was that far from being wiped out, corruption had "doubled, if not trebled" under President Corazon Aquino's government. Few would go that far, but milder criticism about continued corruption has been leveled by both businessmen and the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy.

The FEER's representative, James Clad, did not ignore the political culture, explicating it as follows:

A certain level of corruption is considered "normal" in Philippine society. But both military and civilian critics say privately that they have two specific targets in mind. First, they think Aquino's immediate and extended family has moved with indecent speed to feather its nest. . . Secondly, many believe the very agency set up to clean up the Marcos corruption—the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG)—has itself misused or even misappropriated seized assets. . .

Such allegations reinforce the impression of a society with weak institutions and little tradition of public service among the elite. In fact, the "new" democratic system looks very much like its pre-martial law predecessors, with political power being used for advancing the economic interests of people close to the top.

In general, Clad endorsed Senator Salonga's "Mr. Clean" image, but he noted the numerous failings of the P.C.G.G. Although there had been "some impressive wins" there were also "some hard and well-documented charges [which] suggest that it may also have been dallying with the kind of business practices it has

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

sworn to stamp out.” These practices he then listed:

The PCGG has acquiesced in the transfer of broadcasting facilities to prominent families who pay nothing for the hire of equipment paid for by public monies. Also, the commission has taken over the management of companies—and then farmed out their high-turnover revenues. It has sparked labour troubles, thrown people out of their jobs and made many political enemies.

Commission “task forces” have gone into some sequestered companies, neglecting or even, in some cases, pilfering the assets they are supposed to protect. According to commission sources, at least one cattle shipment belonging to Marcos cronies was sold—for private profit—on an outer Philippine island. The PCGG has moved blatantly into the broadcasting industry, sparking a see-saw battle between business interests and Malacañang, the presidential palace, over political control.

Repercussions of the Honasan Mutiny

The most important long-run effects of Gringo Honasan’s failed *putsch* were political. His theatrical demonstration of military grievances, both political and personal, drove President Aquino to adopt, at least outwardly, a more militant stance *vis à vis* the NPA, and to dismiss the principal identified pro-Communists left in her Cabinet—especially Joker Arroyo—as well as to address the complaints of underpaid and under-equipped soldiers. The President was learning to play survival politics: forced by the political Right to distance herself from the unholy duo of Arroyo and Locsin, she also sacrificed the most prominent Rightist in her Cabinet—Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin—and “Ching” Escaler, her appointments secretary, one of Arroyo’s enemies in the Palace. Still, she resisted the ultra-nationalists’ clamor for the head of Central Bank Governor Jose Fernandez, Jr., one of her numerous in-laws in government. Moreover, her replacement for Arroyo was Arroyo’s own nominee, Catalino Macaraig, a U. P. law school classmate.

The Arroyo Counterattack

Departing, Arroyo stirred up a hornet’s nest. Responding to a Congressional invitation, he counterattacked three prominent members of the Makati business community (which had probably contributed more than any other faction to Aquino’s election). These were Raul Concepcion, twin brother of Minister of Trade Jose Concepcion, Jr., Cesar Buenaventura of Shell Oil, and Rizalino Navarro of the accounting firm of Sycip, Gorres and Velayo. Because of its warm relations with the multinationals, SGV had long been an object of suspicion to the ultra-nationalists. (Arroyo’s sister Nimia had once done a paper on its alleged depredations). The principal spokesman for this campaign has been Larry Henares, Macapagal’s head of the National Economic Council. In a more moderate form, the campaign has been taken up by Solita Monsod, who it was rumored would

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

be removed from the Cabinet for her anti-banker views. Aquino, by refusing to fire Fernandez and Monsod, kept a rough balance between pro-and anti-IMF forces, as she did by replacing Ongpin with Vicente Jayme, who had been a disappointment at Public Works because he had not been tough enough. He was obviously more at home with the financial portfolio.

Responding to the demonstrated truth of charges that corruption was again flourishing at the traditionally graft-ridden Bureaus of Customs, Internal Revenue and Immigration, Aquino said she would remove Cory enthusiasts Alex Padilla, Bienvenido Tan (who however continued in office), and Enrique Joaquin, replacing them with General Mison, an unnamed nominee, and Judge Miriam Defensor-Santiago, all reputedly hard-nosed personalities.

... Some of these events deserve further exegesis. President Aquino's grudging response to military dissatisfaction was again scored by columnist Julie Yap Daza, who pointed out (*Independent*, 9/15/87) that the President was still remiss in failing to acknowledge soldierly pride: "The soldier's self-worth is important to him, much more than his meal allowance, his combat pay or his gun. If some politicians are so narrow that they see it as a political aim, then one realizes how abysmally wide is the gap between the one who does as he is told and the one who tells him to do it." Arroyo's counter-attack (staged-managed by Speaker Mitra) evoked scorn from Arlene Babst-Vokey (*Chronicle*, 9/14/87): "... Arroyo's speech was rambling, evasive, self-serving, marked by statements which were contradictory, deliberately misleading and downright uninformed, as when he practically called the president of Korea an assassin." She reminded readers that Arroyo had repeatedly attacked and denigrated the military: He had said, for example, that "the Government is in control of the military but the military is not in control of itself," and he had called AFP spokesman Col. Isleta "the Goebbels of the military." Defending her assault on Arroyo against his Coryite defenders, Babst concluded:

My reason for strongly criticizing Joker Arroyo the last months is simply that he warrants it. He failed in his job. He mishandled power and trust. And though he can blame businessmen, the appointments secretary, and columnists for his sorry situation, I'll tell him today that he has only one real cause to blame—himself.

Another important result of Gringo's attack was that President Aquino herself was no longer off limits to critics. Nestor Mata in the *Standard* (9/15/87) was fed up with what he called Cory's theme of "starting over," and outraged at Mitra's having given Arroyo a forum both stacked and packed for defending himself:

How many new beginnings will we need to go through before we realize that changes in the Cabinet are not what we need, but changes in the way somebody perceives her role in rebuilding our nation?

Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, during his well-scenaried appearance before the House of Representatives, complete with ingeniously-planted questions and a transparently-rehearsed phalanx of rooters in the gallery, said what he did in directing the military operations during the bloody *putsch*

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

staged by Col. Gringo Honasan, "the mutiny idol," was on orders of President Aquino, commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

Arroyo, "the little President," should have gone farther.

He should have said that Mrs. Aquino, as an array of commentators and analysts here and elsewhere have duly noted, should bear the blame for the fact that very little substantial change has occurred since the February 1986 revolt.

. . . The above paragraphs were completed by the author in mid-September 1987. On September 29, there appeared in the *Chronicle* an article written by Ramon Magsaysay awardee F. Sionil Jose, Leftwing but anti-Communist, bearing a similar message of disappointment. He had weighed Cory in the scales at the end of 18 months and found her totally wanting. Senator Manglapus' defense that President Aquino's troubles were the inevitable accompaniment of the transition from dictatorship to democracy Jose rejected completely: "with intelligence, a firm hand, and the capacity to translate her massive popularity into action, [she] could have avoided these problems." Jose then listed her failures:

- 1) When she appointed her first Cabinet she said she had the best talents working for her. That was simply not true; we know that her first appointments included a lot of incompetents, people with no administrative experience, people known to be corrupt, whose only qualifications were that they were close to her. . .

- 2) She was more concerned with the form rather than the substance of democracy. Had she been concerned with the substance, she should have tackled immediately the agrarian problem; there is no shortage of skills in our Government to do what the Japanese or the Taiwanese did—what was lacking was the political will.

Third, Jose observed that she had lost the support of the most important political constituencies: bureaucracy, the armed forces and many in the church. Then, in a crashing coda, Jose judged that the main reason for her failure was a reversion to type:

All along she was a Cojuangco, an extremely wealthy landlord—with all the condescending attributes of the landlord class to peasantry.

I think she has also been afflicted, together with some of her advisers, by that most crippling of diseases which the ancient Greeks called hubris. Only someone so afflicted will say that she does not welcome unsolicited advice.

A million people shouting Cory! Cory!—and I among them—must have convinced her and her advisers that not only did she have divine guidance but that she could do no wrong. The cheering in the US Congress, her streams of visitors, her victories at the polls must have reinforced further her belief in her leadership and the loyalty of "her soldiers" and "her people."

This article, apparently written a month earlier, is remarkable for its unapologetic criticism of the aspiring saint. It appears in its entirety in Appendix A.

. . . Yet another victim was claimed by what most of the press believed was a salvaging by the military when Lean Alejandro, radical student leader (*Bayan*), was assassinated on September 19. His embittered wife was photographed giving

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

the Communist salute, and President Aquino appointed one more investigative commission. A funeral at which the military was told it would not be welcome was held on September 29, and Alejandro's friends claimed that reports the NPA would form a Lean Alejandro liquidation brigade was a screen erected by the military behind which they would murder other Leftist leaders. For its part, the AFP suggested that *Bayan* infighting had been responsible for Alejandro's death.

. . . The PMA was still a pro-Honasan stronghold, as a letter sent from that institutions (name of writer withheld on request) witnessed in the *Independent* (9/23/87):

Somehow, someone who is willing to give everything should speak not in a voice loud enough to be heard so that society may become aware of the pain being caused by the same wound rotting in neglect. Somehow, the public has to realize that the wound is no longer isolated in a far flung limb, but is eating away at the body's core. The wounds are so grave that a moment lost in indecision will spell death and decay. Though the action we took was against tradition, nothing less can be fought for in a society embroiled in chaos and disillusion.

. . . One additional casualty inflicted by the unsuccessful coup was "People Power". Under the caption "People Power: Myth or Reality," Lily Lim, a Cory enthusiast, wrote sadly (*Chronicle*, 7/23/87):

. . . after that brief and powerful burst of glory . . . , People Power consumed itself, its participants dissolving into the mire of apathy and lethargy once more, while some of its known guardians—who have been well-rewarded with Government posts and business interests—have resorted to closing their eyes and mouths to the blunders and excesses of the new leaders (if not adding to these themselves) in the mistaken belief that their silence would best serve the nation's interests.

What is this People Power that makes itself known and felt only during election day, plebiscite day, EDSA day or other occasions requiring physical presence, yet is lost in the course of daily life when its vigilant spirit is needed most? What is this People Power that thrust a reluctant martyr's widow into the political centerstage, then left her groping her lonely and uncertain way through self-centered and bungling advisers and greedy relatives?

The Strange Deaths of (1) General Ocampo and (2) Charlotte Datiles

(1) One alleged scenario of the two weeks preceding the *putsch*, available only in the *Manila Times* (9/21/87) went as follows: On September 18, Ileta and Ramos, at a meeting held in the presence of senior military and civilian officials, gave President Aquino an ultimatum demanding military reforms and the discharge of certain Cabinet members. On August 23, President Aquino allegedly met with Honasan himself, urging him to abandon any plans for a coup. However, he insisted that she discharge senior military officers, including Ramos, along with certain Cabinet secretaries. The President rebuffed Honasan, urging him "to seek military reform through constitutional means." High officials then summoned Brig. Gen. Eugenio Ocampo, former Chief of Regional

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Command 3 (Central Luzon) for questioning, and he was reported to have confirmed that there was a conspiracy. The Palace next ordered Honasan to a meeting, but Gringo instead launched his attack. General Ocampo then died when his helicopter crashed in Mauban, Quezon. Out of the several passengers aboard, including Brig. Gen. Abelardo Samonte, Ocampo was miraculously the only casualty. Ocampo's death was mysterious. His body was found strapped to his seat, and his head bore a contusion. . . Such a scenario has not been confirmed, but the circumstances of General Ocampo's death have fed speculations that he was liquidated by a member of Cory's "Yellow Army," as Ninoy is believed to have been eliminated by the Marcos military as a vexation to President Marcos.⁸⁸

(2) There were some who thought of Chappaquiddick when the story of Charlotte Datiles filtered out. Noynoy Aquino's experience with the rebel soldiers was at first reported as one in which only his four security men were killed, and he wounded. Little by little, there was talk of a girl who had also died, and subsequent references sounded "curioser and curioser" to Dula of the *Independent*, who on September 26 wrote, cryptically: he had seen references to a heroic West Pointer, class of 1980, who had lost a leg and suffered other injuries while "tracking down members of the NPA Sparrow unit." The lieutenant had been accompanied by Ms. Datiles, an ex-Maryknoll student, who "insisted on accompanying" the heroic officer and their driver "back to Malacañang". She was allegedly being groomed as an "asset" for the intelligence community, and

What finally happened to her: She got it because she was sitting at the back of the car. Like him, she was likewise brought to the FEU hospital, contrary to earlier claims she had been disposed of rather unceremoniously, away from prying eyes.

But a real fine officer and gentleman this first lieutenant is, to be sure. "The first burst hit me," he states, but is able to volunteer that "they were hit by projectiles fired from an M-79 grenade launchers, and bullets fired from an M-60 machine gun." Awesome firepower, that. . .

Dula wrote that the unnamed officer sympathized with Gringo's objective but deplored his tactics, and had words of appreciation for the Chief of Staff: "Without AFP chief Gen. Fidel V. Ramos at the helm, we would not have survived these crises." The columnist concluded, tongue in cheek:

Alice has met him in Wonderland, and she is as perplexed as she is amused. She frets that he has lost a leg, but is overjoyed that he has a girlfriend, and unlike Charlotte Datiles, who was where she shouldn't ever have been, she is alive, and she is faithful.

⁸⁸ See author's *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, p. 223.

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan *Putsch*

Laurel Splits from Aquino

Vice President Laurel's departure from the Aquino Cabinet was another case study in the Philippine political culture. It was, as always, a family affair—a minuet conducted like a chess game. After President Aquino had strengthened her ties to the Laurels by helping to elect his brother Sotero Laurel as Senator, she tried to detach Jose Laurel III from effective support to Doy's UNIDO with an appointment as Ambassador to Japan (for which he had excellent qualifications). The vice President then riposted by making political hay touring the country's military camps to listen to the soldiers' complaints. Next, the President, ostensibly in order to resolve their differences, invited the Laurels to a family *tete-à-tete* (Jose Cojuangco, Jr., Butz Aquino, Cory vs. Jose Jr., Jose III and Doy Laurel). It turned out that despite honeyed words, too little was offered by the Cojuangco-Aquinos to the Laurels, whose political influence they felt could now be simply ignored, since the UNIDO was emasculated as a result of having so long kept its leader, the vice-President, chained to the Cabinet. The two families therefore parted outward friends but inwardly still more determined enemies.

Doy's next move was to announce plans for making public what he called a list of some 50 Communists in government which he said had been compiled by the military. Predictably, this evoked the counter-charge of McCarthyism. President Aquino, backed by General Canieso of NICA, at first claimed that no such list existed, but some of the effectiveness of this denial was reduced by evidence that the President's letter and Canieso's had been written on the same typewriter. Called before Congress, Canieso then confirmed that Laurel's statement was correct—that there was such a list, but that it was "unofficial." Some Five Senators, 17 Congressmen and three Palace officials allegedly on the list all denied that they were Communists, though several proudly claimed the name of Progressives.

Cory Prays

During the last days of September, President Aquino was hurriedly scheduled to appear on one radio and one T.V. program weekly. The arrangers apparently believed that the public would welcome the message that her prayers always allowed her to sleep peacefully and her assurance that Philippine democracy would survive its trials. Still, as Malou Mangahas (*Chronicle*, 9/27/87) observed: "To allow the President to be seen and heard more often has its advantages, but only if followed by swift action on festering issues." By such a standard, Cory was failing: the number one NPA leader on the island of Panay escaped from house arrest in the residence of her parents—a tender punishment prescribed personally by President Aquino in the name of humanity. As for the effectiveness of the President's repeated moral homilies, Nestor Mata wrote the same day in the *Standard* that the nationwide radio programs projected by her Palace

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

advisers would hardly be adequate:

Such motherly talk, they obviously hope, should be enough to wash away the stomach pains caused by hunger, the heartaches caused by mourning for the deaths of loved ones, the anger caused by the loss of jobs and properties, and the thousand and one shocks naturally caused by strong-armed methods of both the PCGG sequesterrors and the rapacious new officers-in-charge, presidential relatives and cronies.

NPA's Amputate the Bicol Peninsula

One of the most portentous developments in the NPA's war against the Aquino government was given dramatic form on September 20, when a detachment of 200 armed NPAs high-jacked a train from Manila to Legaspi (in the center of the Bicol peninsula), and then dynamited two major bridges, thus briefly cutting off the peninsula by both rail and road. AFP reinforcements had to be sent by air. Poor and typhoon-buffeted, the region has long been a center of dissidence, with mountains encroaching on rice and abaca fields from several sides, and the NPA armed formations have long held several towns hostage, while the Carmoan peninsula in Camarines Sur has always been a desolate, infertile area, mainly accessible from the sea. The blasting of the bridges called forth a statement from Senator Victor Ziga of the Bicol, which because of its thrice-repeated words "unconfirmed" or "it is reported", was less than a clarion call to alert his countrymen to the danger:

Already, unconfirmed reports are filtering into my office that serious efforts are now being undertaken to establish in the Bicol region the seat of clandestine government. Towards this end, covert maneuverings, so it is reported, including the landing of firearms by submarines along the coastal regions, have been undertaken by as yet unnamed and unknown elements. The destruction of bridges, the disruption of essential public services, like communications and the supply of electricity, are all aimed, so it is reported, in the complete isolation and dismemberment of the Bicol region from the rest of the country, to make it an easy prey to forces unfriendly to the present government.

If the NPA's should take over the Bicol peninsula, Manila will be in a pincers. On the other coast facing the China Sea is the Bataan peninsula, the home of the traditionally most aggressive NPA's in the Philippines. There they have since the February revolution held to tribute the town of Samal (not far from Subic Naval Base), while nearby Dinalupihan in Pampanga has always been a hotbed of dissidence. Pampanga itself (where Clark Air Field is situated) has long been disaffected and the NPA is strong in Bulacan, the next province south, particularly in its mountainous portions in the East, while several of the towns of Rizal province, northeast, and Laguna northwest, of Manila can probably be taken over (but not held) by the NPA's, whenever they please. Except by sea, therefore, Manila is surrounded but not as yet sealed off.

. . . Meanwhile, Baguio's citizens were waiting in fear and trembling for the

Another Cabinet Reorganization and the Honasan Putsch

installation of Father Balweg's autonomous Cordillera government mandated by the Philippine Constitution. Balweg was an enemy of the NPA, but he knew nothing of governing, and the Baguio population was among the most advanced and sophisticated in the Philippines.

* * * * *

Thus, as of the last week of September 1987, President Aquino stood, her head "bloody but unbowed," thanking not "whatever Gods may be" but Jesus Christ himself (and the U. S. government) for the survival of her government. The outlook, however, was gloomy. The always strategically vulnerable Bicol peninsula, with a history of dissidence, was rumored to be the soon-to-be proclaimed site of an NPA government. The region had been isolated by the NPA's, with both major road and rail lines cut. Meanwhile, Gringo Honasan flitted in and out of Manila and nearby provinces, protected by both military and civilian sympathizers. The President's Generals predicted more *coup* attempts, but reiterated their belief that Gringo's revolutionary potential had passed its peak. The political coalition which had supported Mrs. Aquino's government had broken up,⁸⁹ and vice President Laurel had resigned as Foreign Minister from her Cabinet, charging there were many Communists in the government, an accusation which Cory denied categorically. Urban NPAs, especially the Sparrow assassination units, struck almost daily. *Caciques* and warlords, a few new, mostly familiar, had reestablished themselves in nearly all the remote provinces in preparation for the January local elections. Cory's supporters on the Far Left had defected and were now calling her an enemy. Her own political party, after 19 months, was much more a one-woman and family machine than that of Marcos after six years in power. Only the United States government, apparently, had no doubts of her strength, determination and ability to lead her country, despite acknowledged dangers and defections. On September first, Ambassador Platt even threatened the military with the loss of all economic assistance if it tried to unseat her government.⁹⁰ Cory herself could offer as evidence of vigor only another

⁸⁹ The Leftist U.P. Professor Francisco Nemenzo, Jr., had disingenuously called it a "rain-bow coalition," which wags supplemented with the words "covering a wide spectrum from pink to red."

⁹⁰ Later, in its excess of pro-Cory zeal, the Embassy apparently was willing to antagonize the future Philippine military establishment, endangering a long-valued asset. As Cecilio Arillo, the Enrile/RAM sympathizer, wrote in the *Manila Times* (10/19/87):

Articulating Washington's uncritical support for the Aquino government, Platt may not have realized that he was further alienating a generation of military officers whose duty it will be to keep this country from communism.

US continued support to Aquino is seen by many observers as a failure to calibrate its response to the military crisis in the country that may force the young generation of officers, whom Blas Ople described as heirs to the

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

reorganization of her Cabinet and more public exposure. A resurgent Congress' two principal leaders, Senate President Salonga and House Speaker Mitra, were already well launched on their respective campaigns to succeed Aquino in 1992, but were not unmindful of a dark horse, daily brighter—General Ramos, who, after the United States, was President Aquino's most visible and puissant supporter.

With the announcement of the winner of the Nobel Prize only two weeks away, President Aquino thus closed the nineteen months of her government under siege from both the Left and Right, coups rumored and actual, strikes called more often for purely political objectives than because of wages or working conditions, and almost daily demonstrations, punctuated by assassins' bullets, by one group or another. What a Nobel Prize won or lost would contribute to the stability of her government, even if it should set a seal on her reputation as a peacemaker, was left to the imagination of her supporters.

Aguinaldo tradition and the EDSA revolution, to break away from the rigid mold of US military indoctrination.

Col. Gringo Honasan . . . hinted that it might be necessary then "to reject the foreign models that external forces would like to impose on us." This is a new language never before heard in the military that Honasan had introduced for the young generation of leaders in the AFP who will be relying on raw courage and idealism to fight communism to preserve democracy and their dignity as Filipino soldiers.

Chapter XI

ONGPIN'S DEATH AND THE JANUARY 1988 LOCAL ELECTIONS

In 1972, President Marcos had found himself unable to govern democratically. On his political Right, there were warlords who commanded in many provinces. Outside the warlords' citadels, on his Left, the Communist NPAs were strongly entrenched, and in Manila, student groups had assaulted Malacañang itself. The Congress was the domain of factions chiefly intent on plundering the national treasury, demanding payment for every piece of legislation which the President and his technocrats in the Cabinet sent them for approval. For some months, a group inside the military had urged him to declare martial law in order to escape from government paralysis. . .

Fifteen years later, after six or seven years of satisfactory progress under martial law, followed by a roughly equal period first of decline, and then collapse, President Marcos' military forces mutinied and Filipinos poured into the streets of Manila first to acclaim and then to anoint their leader, Corazon Aquino, wife of the martyred Senator Benigno Aquino. It was hoped that Ninoy's widow would restore democratic freedoms, promote national prosperity and defeat a Communist insurgency.⁹¹ As the months passed, however, President Aquino disappointingly succeeded only in the first of these objectives. In the process, strangely without realizing it, she simply restored the Philippine political culture of 1972—a corrupt, two-family oligarchy unable to govern effectively—in her case, ultimately kept in power chiefly by U. S. support—economic, military, and particularly, moral.

The fundamental error of the *Aquinistas* (and the United States) was their belief that by removing the monsters in the Palace and dismantling the Marcos/Romualdez family machines, the former democratic institutions would again spring to life. This hope, as the lawyers say, assumed a fact not in evidence. There *were* no such democratic institutions, supported by moral values pledged to their faithful functioning. The Philippines, whatever the fervor of its political campaigns or the rhetoric of office holders and their puppets (or blackmailers) in the press, was a society of warring families, united in temporary electoral alliances for the purpose of sharing the wealth as dictated by their leaders. When the former despots were thrown out, a new set, the Cojuangcos and Aquinos, took their places.⁹²

⁹¹ The author's interpretation of the Marcos regime's rise and fall is to be found in his *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture* (Manila, 1987).

⁹² This process, by which the Philippine political culture asserts its prerogatives, is described in Appendix B. Behind its facade of American political institution, it bears, particularly at the top, an eerie resemblance to Chinese political life, with its family intrigues, its struggle for dynastic succession and its bland denials of personal motivation as described by Ross Terrill in his biography of Mrs. Mao, *The White-Boned Demon*.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Post-Nobel Award Maneuvers

The days after President Aquino's failure to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which most observers (including the author) were certain she would receive, Mrs. Aquino announced that she would invite the NDF to resume peace negotiations. It sounded as if she was prepared, whatever the risks, to persevere yet another years in her resolution to pursue the peace prize, though she did insist that the NDF set an acceptable agenda. Then, mysteriously, something happened to change the President's mind. On October 20, in a forceful and assertive speech to Manila businessmen, she adopted what on the face of it were most of the policies that Conservatives had long been urging on her without heretofore evoking any positive response. The new departures in her speech, a strange combination of routine housekeeping improvements and major policy decisions, were succinctly and fairly summarized in the *Chronicle* as:

- Lawmen to tear down all illegal-strike blockages, enforce return-to-work orders
- No power rates increase this year
- Manila garbage to go in one week
- Metro Manila potholes to be filled up
- PLDT to act on complaints in 24 hours
- All non-performing assets to be sold
- No new round of peace talks with NDF
- Priority for graft cases involving Cabinet members
- Debt rescheduling accord out by Nov. 15

President Aquino's fervent but critical partisan, Armando Doronilla of the *Chronicle*, wrote on October 23 that such a program could recover the momentum which the preceding 20 months had frittered away. In his opinion, the President had finally laid down the rules of the game, "something she did only after squandering for more than 19 months from taking office the momentum to push for political and social change."

Reaction to these announced changes of policy was favorable but cautious. *If* the President was now serious, and would in fact insist on her announced policies, selecting experienced, competent officials to execute and administer them, there was hope, if not for personal sainthood, for national survival. Still, it would still be touch and go. . . Not the least encouraging aspect of this striking change of rhetoric at the Palace was the widely-expressed opinion that after nineteen months of yea-saying, the United States, behind the scenes, had finally nudged the President to the Right. . . The succeeding weeks however offered no positive evidence that such was the case, and then came a body-blow: Jaime Ongpin's death.

Stonehill Pays a Visit

First, however, there occurred a *divertissement*—an unexpected visit in early November from Hurry Stonehill, charged with corruption and deported by

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

President Macapagal in 1962. Though he had a distinguished sponsor, Cardinal Sin, who had twice written President Aquino pleading that Stonehill be permitted to return, he was again expelled from the Manila (Ninoy Aquino) International Airport on November 15. Accompanied by a secretary, he had slipped into the country undetected, spending two weeks with friends in Makati before reporters were tipped off. They sent the immigration officials scurrying on a highly-publicized hunt both for Harry and the official who had passed him through the barrier set up by his deportation order. Disappointed but beaming, Stonehill said on his escorted departure that he had enjoyed his quick visit: "It was fascinating!" On December 2, he again spent two hours in the VIP room at the airport en route to Honolulu. Sadly, not one favorable word, apart from the Cardinal's letters, was said publicly on his behalf. Stonehill's love for the Philippines was still unrequited despite money to invest. The Philippine government had missed yet another opportunity to repatriate capital earned in the Philippines, but Cory had presumably one-upped the Cardinal in the moral sphere.

The Death of Jaime Ongpin

No one had been so totally identified with both the Aquino victory and administration as Jaime Ongpin, Aquino's cashiered Finance Minister, and perhaps no act—not even Honasan's *putsch*—struck her and her government more punishingly than his death. It was Ongpin's courageous attacks on the Marcos government which shamed the Makati financial community into active, rather than passive resistance. The brilliant and kinetic young man thus fueled Cory's campaign with both funds and fervor. He then became a major factor—against the resistance of other Opposition leaders—in converting Cory herself from a symbol of martyrdom into the paramount political leader of the Opposition. It was he, finally, who led the onerous international debt negotiations against not only the resistance of creditors but the guerilla attacks on his policies by the combined forces of Filipino ultra-nationalists and the Leftists. When the President sacrificed him to his enemies inside and outside the Cabinet, it was not only a shock to the international financial community (which was about to award him recognition as the currently most impressive of Finance Ministers), but to Filipinos, who traditionally put *utang na loob*—a debt of gratitude—at the apex of their value system. Her appearance at Ongpin's funeral, expressing routine courtesies without even indirectly acknowledging the fact that his expulsion from her Cabinet had been a gross violation of *utang na loob*—deeply wounded many of Cory's heretofore most loyal supporters.

The spontaneous outpouring of grief, however, was combined with a curious reluctance (from an administration whose official inquiries into mysterious deaths are announced almost weekly) to pursue any investigation of the tragedy reported as a suicide in the face of much evidence that he had been in good spirits on December 7 only hours before he was found dead at his desk, the gun in his hand not registered in his name but with reported powder burns on his

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

right hand. A claimed suicide note was never released to the public, which apparently in the end accepted the verdict of suicide as less painful than implications of foul play. Among the most meaningful expressions of grief were those of Doronila in the *Chronicle*, who emphasized that others had shared Ongpin's frustrations with the government:

Those who joined the funeral to Jimmy Ongpin yesterday were not only his close friends, admirers and relatives. The throng was also composed of the legion of disenchanted supporters of the Aquino Government. This alienated legion found empathy in Mr. Ongpin's frustrations with the Government he helped install in office. Regardless of whether or not they believe that he took his own life, his shattered dream was also theirs.

Later in his column, the columnist pointed out a major source of Ongpin's frustrations:

Many disagreed with Mr. Ongpin's prescriptions but it was not the argument of his opponents that dismayed him. It was the process of decision-making in the Aquino Cabinet and the drift and paralysis that gripped it that made him lose heart.

In one of the Cabinet meetings after dismissal of the defense minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, . . . Mr. Ongpin, in his characteristic blunt manner, was reported to have remarked that the Government had better stop squandering its opportunities because it might not have a second chance.

The comment of Anthony Spaeth, in the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, was tellingly captioned "Jaime Ongpin: Camelot Lost", and expressed the view that Mrs. Aquino had not only lost the revolution but failed to govern effectively:

. . . Jaime Ongpin-Jimmy to all—was one of the brightest hopes of the Aquino government. He was brilliant, fiercely dedicated, and groomed for the difficult job of finance minister at Harvard and in the executive suite. Jimmy was the first to admit, with a bullet in his brain, that the glorious revolution he believed in was dying.

Of course, Mrs. Aquino remains in power. But she's proved herself unequal to the problems she faces. She hasn't brought revolutionary change to her country, which she could have and which it needs. . .

The Filipinos have missed their historic opportunity for change by mistaking Mr. Marcos's ouster for a revolution, by gabbing when they should have been working, and by shrugging away the succession of little failures—matters of morality, the military, of yawning inefficiency—that now threaten to discredit, if not topple, the Aquino administration.

In some ways the most significant comment on Ongpin's death, however, came from the Jesuits, who had educated Ongpin at the Ateneo de Manila. Fr. Joaquin Bernas, the Ateneo's president and one of Mrs. Aquino's most influential advisers in the early days of her regime, first commented in the *Bulletin*. Alvin Capino then followed in the *Globe* (12/14/87):

As intense as the Jesuit's defense of Ongpin was their criticism of President Aquino. . . Bernas wrote: "although not appreciated by the government he helped set up and served at so much personal sacrifice, he served nonetheless with unstinting devotion."

The Center for Policy Issues was more bitter in its criticism of Mrs. Aquino when it said in the "Business Mores" column (*Globe*, December 12, page 10) that in the passing of Jimmy "the ultimate abuse was when the leader he

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

served so faithfully dropped him summarily.”

Going beyond the death of Jimmy, the column said that by his death “he was communicating to tell the nation that not only are things not right in our country (which many of us know) but importantly there is something irreversible, inevitable and certainly unacceptable about the way the country is moving and progressing.”

Are the Jesuits, who like Jimmy contributed a lot to the rise to power to Mrs. Aquino, taking an adversarial relationship toward her? If so Mrs. Aquino may have lost something more than the man in Jimmy Ongpin’s death.⁹³

The ASEAN Conference and Honasan’s Capture

However little could be claimed for the ASEAN conference held in Manila from December 12 to 14, it was a Godsend for President Aquino, since preparations for the affair shifted the spotlight from Ongpin’s death. Then, in what almost appeared a propaganda stunt timed to enhance the prospects of the conference, the unsuccessful rebel Gregorio Honasan was captured with great ease in a Manila subdivision only days before the conference. Cecilio Arillo, known to be a close associate of Honasan, and Steve Levine, a New York journalist, were nabbed at the same time. It seemed likely that the two journalists may unwittingly have let the sixty-man military force to Honasan’s lair.

The capture set off a debate on whether Honasan, like the NPA, should be offered amnesty, but Gringo was guilty of leading a rebellion in which several score soldiers of the Presidential Guard died, and it seemed unlikely that the Palace would approve the amnesty proposal. Following Honasan’s apprehension, several other RAM associates voluntarily surrendered, but a few headed by Navy Captain Felix Turingan, remained in hiding, insisting that they would carry on their crusade for what they now called “good government”—shorthand for less corruption and less domination by Aquinos and Cojuangcos.

The conference itself produced some platitudes, but was devoid of any material results. Its significance was that the invited heads of State, despite the objections of their security advisers, had agreed to come—which they did, surrounded by phalanxes of armed men, helicopters and bullet-proof limousines. One columnist called it a “summit in a fox hole”, which was an unkind, but not wholly inaccurate comment. Still, Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus was as usual earnest and dignified, and each ASEAN representative spoke hopeful words of appreciation for Mrs. Aquino and her beleaguered government.

The United States and the Young AFP Officers

It is the thesis of the writer that the United States, blinded by its devotion to

⁹³ Not all Catholics could accept the counsel of Ongpin’s confessor, Fr. Antonio Lambino, S.J., who urged: “The rhyme and reason for what saddened him must remain a secret between him and his God. We should do him honor by surrounding that secret with reverence and respect.” Malou Mangahas, *Chronicle* (12/31/87).

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

Mrs. Aquino, has misunderstood the young PMA graduates associated with Gregorio Honasan, who as the two year mark of the Aquino regime approached, represented the only reform force still not suffocated by the Aquino/Cojuangco government's co-optation. This is not to assert that RAM could achieve its stated objectives of good government if it came to power—it, no less than predecessor reform movements, is still hemmed in by the political culture—but it was the only progressive force today with an *elan* to match that of the Communists. The case for the RAM has been put best by retired AFP General Florencio Magsino (*Globe*, 12/14/87), and the United States will be well advised to ponder it carefully, for once unswayed by its inveterate hostility toward men in uniform:

The young men who opt for a lifetime career in the military service, especially those who enter the PMA, by and large, do so with the intention of serving the country and the people, notwithstanding the fact that they most likely may be called upon to put their very lives on the line. They generally dream of becoming heroes and of even doing extraordinary feats for love of country. There are some, of course, who have strayed away from this ideal, but in general, deep down in the hearts of men in uniform there still burns the fire of patriotism that originally attracted them to military service. When these aspirations are snuffed out by the rulers and the public, however, demoralization and disillusionment necessarily must spread. In fact, it takes only a little provocation to mobilize them to overthrow rulers and flout the public. This fact was precisely President Marcos' fatal mistake.

Magsino conceded that the President's speech of October 20 seemed to offer hope, but he, like the author, saw little subsequent evidence that those hopes would be realized. He rejected the view that the military's bread-and-butter issues were the decisive ones:

Civilian leaders think that by increasing military compensation, the soldiers will be appeased. Perhaps so for those who are in the AFP only for employment. But *for the PMA graduates, good government is their obsession*. . . Most officers, believe it or not, come from poor families. They have risen in station in life, but see many of their poor kin or former neighbors trudge through the same drudgery and endless exploitation. They would like to assist them get a better deal in life, but then reality is harsh. The only way is through good government.

Turning to the behavior of the politicians, Magsino was bitter:

Now, the civilian leaders are back to their antics. Congress is drunk with power, with some of its members really going haywire, making irresponsible accusations or throwing their weight around. Administration officials are preparing for the elections; so dear buddy, forget all about that much-desired good government. Media feed on the unholy, the sensational, the adversarial, the critical, and the dirty linen to make the nation stand out as the worst on earth. Cause-oriented and communist-sympathizing groups denounce every action that is designed to fight insurgency and terrorism.

The retired officer warned that facing such provocations, the patience of the young idealistic officers was not inexhaustible:

If you expect the military and the PMA graduates to be happy, you are wrong. If things get out of hand any further so that even the public disapprove actively of what is going on, then we may have to face once again the spectre of martial rule.

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

Magsino had stern words of advice for the country's civilian leaders:

. . . the whole military has looked forward to good government to achieve economic recovery, to defeat the insurgency, and to enforce the law—all these to avoid communists rule and the massacre of the soldiers. . . The military respects General Ramos and admires his competence and dedication. But at this stage, many believe that he is ineffective (interpret that as weak, vacillating and indecisive) because the civilian leaders just listen to him expound his ideas, announce acceptance of his proposals, and then promptly forget about them. In other words, "*panay bale-wala* (always worthless)." It took, unfortunately, a Honasan-attempted *coup* to shake up the government into realizing that the military is really that unhappy.

General Ramos, the commentator believed, was seen by many officers as weak and by some in the administration as a potential rival, but any replacement might listen to those in the military who demanded the re-introduction of martial law:

With the capture of Honasan, it is to be hoped that those sectors of the civilian government will cease to discredit and seek the ouster of General Ramos just because, according to some observers, he is potential presidential timber. Ramos has proved himself to be a veritable rock of strength in his support for constitutional democracy and in his loyalty to President Aquino. We believe that all of the generals being eyed to replace General Ramos possess the same capability, dedication and dependability, but the big question is: Will any one of them be able to resist the pressure from below to impose military rule? President Macapagal, Senator Angara, UP President Abueva, several senators and congressmen, many female columnists and anti-military leftists have fulminated against militarization and military politicization. They are shouting against the wind!

Finally, Magsino called attention to the threat that even unsuccessful *coup* attempts represented:

. . . the military has had several exercises in attempts to grab power—martial law in 1972, the February 1986 *coup d'état*, the July 1986 Manila Hotel attempted *coup*, and lastly, the August 28, 1987 *coup* attempt. In other words, the AFP is brimming with experience in attempts to seize national power, though not always with success. It is not difficult for them to organize teams to arrest the target leaders, the key anti-government and anti-military elements as well as the loud-mouth trouble makers. Will they, however, do so? I sincerely believe, no; not as long as there still exist other avenues to be explored by which peace and order may be established in this country we all love.

Neal Cruz, in the same newspaper, nine days later reminded the Aquino administration that although Gringo's wings had been clipped, he was still a force to be reckoned with:

One thing I regret about Gringo being safely put away is that many government officials will again get too cocky and become unbearable. With Gringo on the loose, at least he had the effect of a Sword of Damocles over the heads of crooked government officials, the same effect that the NPAs have on the local government officials in the countryside.

. . . many—too many—people don't see Gringo the way the *yellows* do. There are people who truly see him as a hero. He has such charisma that even the government propaganda campaign to deglamorize him have no effect on

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

his fans. . . Putting him behind bars won't end his popularity. It would only increase it. He would become a legend. It has happened many times before. . . Legends were built around them so that when they got out of prison, they easily ousted the leaders who put them in prison. . .

That even senators and congressmen are thinking of giving amnesty to Gringo is just one indication of his popularity. After all, he was one of the leaders of the February Revolution that toppled Marcos and gave Corazon Aquino the presidency of the Philippines. No matter what the Aquino administration say and do now, people will not forget that.

. . . All in all, these warnings were better understood by the Filipino leaders than Mrs. Aquino's American supporters, stonily unwilling to accept the fact that military uniforms clothed virtue as often as aggression, and that the togas of the civilian politicians as often concealed corrupted as pure hearts.

Yet Another Sea Disaster

What was called the world's greatest peacetime maritime catastrophe occurred in the Philippines on December 20, 1987. The *Doña Paz*, crammed with 1583 passengers officially listed on the manifest and probably hundreds not manifested, along with 60 crew members, struck the tanker *Victor*, loaded with 8000 barrels of oil, in the Tablas Strait between Mindoro and Marinduque, islands not far south of Manila. Both vessels caught fire and sank quickly, with only 26 of those on board rescued. Despite the appalling loss of life, a deeper tragedy perhaps lay in the fact that such calamities seem to be an inescapable feature of Philippine life. Hardly a year passes without news of an overloaded ship sinking with only a few survivors. What might be called a national proclivity for disasters is however just another example of the damaged Philippine culture. Ships' officers are careless and shipowners are greedy, but equally important is the inveterate Filipino hostility to rules and to discipline in general. The Coast Guard is charged with seeing that loading capacities are not exceeded, and that safety equipment is up to prescribed standards, but bribery to look the other way rather than to enforce regulations is perhaps less important in explaining these disasters than the general disrespect for all regulations and a *macho* pride in disregard of both regulations and danger. Any assertion of authority to impose obedience to the rules is usually received by Filipinos as personally hostile conduct, whether by ships' crews or the Coast Guard.

Businessmen Still Unsatisfied with Government Performance

Though Joe Guevara reported in the *Bulletin* (1/8/88) that "President Aquino had told her Cabinet that the country's three greatest problems were unemployment, lack of peace and order and insufficiency of the government bureaucracy," the unctuous pedagogue in Cory again surfaced as she appealed for what she awkwardly called "the observance of public ethics to reduce graft and corruption and the striving for economic gain." Not surprisingly, such advice left the

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

businessmen still skeptical, while Opposition politicians made use of the dissatisfaction to promote their own causes. Reacting to a survey of businessmen's attitudes toward government which showed disapproval or disappointment with government policies toward the business sector, Senator Salonga, who had re-established the Liberal Party and inducted several former Cory Senators as well as GAD Senator Estrada, was quoted on December 27 as saying that business was

accepting Government policies by sufferance, . . . while goodwill still abounds, patience is not infinite.

Clearly, we have not managed our affairs very well—both political and economic, for these are interlocking.

We are witnessing a serious indictment by the business community of the Government's inability to enforce basic laws for the protection of life and property. These undoubtedly are the most elemental, as they affect our very survival.

By a margin of 12 to one, businessmen denied that the government's policy of promoting industrial peace was being effectively executed, and the reporters of the survey pointed out that politically inspired strikes sabotaged the government's announced programs:

. . . when work stops because a small and militant minority is fomenting disorder to worsen unsettled conditions, and then advances whatever sinister designs it may have, and when short of using force the authorities are unable to control the situation, then there is cause for alarm.

. . . Palace spokesman Locsin, on the other hand, in a public announcement, reported nothing but strength in the economy's performance during 1987.

U. S. Congressional Representatives Promise More Assistance

Cory's own Congressmen again took a back seat to her enthusiasts in the American Democratic Party during the first weeks of January. U. S. Democratic Senators Melcher and Exon competed with New York-Manila commuting Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz to show their love for Cory and her brand of democracy. Senator Melcher even urged the Philippines to ask for more rent for the U. S. bases, though he suggested linkage between the bases and a "mini-Marshall Plan" for the Philippines. Solarz denied any necessary linkage; Cory's democracy was apparently in itself more than adequate return for use of the bases. The distinguished visitors fortunately stayed out of the line of electoral fire, bodies were falling all around them as the local elections approached, but they departed unscathed, hailing this most recent democratic exercise, which would prove the bloodiest in Philippine history.

The January 1988 Local Elections

On January 18, the Aquino government held elections for local officials (Governors, Mayors, Provincial Boards, City Councilmen). The first since 1982, they set new records for violence. As of February 1, there had been 146 deaths (of whom 42 were candidates) 127 wounded (16 candidates) and 46 kidnapped

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

(22 candidates). A week after the elections, ballot counting had not been completed in much of Manila and its environs, and only 10,000 out of the 16,000 elected had been proclaimed. The competing candidates' armed or unarmed followers were interfering ("People's Power") with the canvassing, and the Commission on Elections (Comelec) was unable to assert its authority, calling on the armed forces to eject the rioters. Nevertheless, the State Department's spokesman strangely found the elections satisfactory and still more remarkably, further evidence of the strength of Mrs. Aquino's government. The basis of its blessing was undisclosed; perhaps Undersecretary Armacost was reading his tea leaves. Whatever the Department's criteria, by its praise of the Aquino government, it could claim credit for influencing favorably the prospects of the President's candidates. As for the local press, it deplored the violence, but was pleased that the "dynasties" seemed weakened. The *Globe* (1/16/88) ruefully acknowledged that violence was part of the political culture:

... the failure of the authorities to enforce peace and order is only part of the problem. If elections in the Western countries turn out to be relatively peaceful, it is only partly because of their police forces' capacity to do their job. Mainly it's because the people themselves have internalized the essence rather than the ritual of democracy. That means, among others, winning—if not always fairly and squarely—at least peacefully. . . Elections are supposed to usher in democracy but we can only wonder what kind of democracy we'll have in the wake of elections that are won by murdering the competition.

However much we bristle at the thought that visiting American senators have to remind us that democracy is premised on law and order, we know they're right. Here, at least, we know we only have ourselves to blame for putting up a sorry spectacle before the world.

Apart from the mayhem and the by-now familiar wretched failure of the Comelec to discharge its mandate, the results of the elections simply set the seal on a return to pre-1972 politics: a two-family alliance reigned in the Palace, warlords in the outlying provinces (though here and there new faces replaced the old). Most of the President's candidates had been elected, more assisted by the administration's funds and organization and media support in the metropolis than by "Cory magic." In the countryside, where the warlords were not in control, the NPA, which had begun radio broadcasts a week earlier, either issued safe conduct passes to politicians who played ball by paying NPA taxes, or elected their own candidates. Anti-dynasty campaigns by Senators Salonga and Pimentel had had some effect. The Sumulong, Salonga's rivals for control of vote-rich Rizal, suffered humiliation, but the Sumulong was politically only poor relatives (and sometimes rivals) of their *parientes*, the Aquinos/Cojuangcos. Probably the best of Cory's *parientes*, the widowed Mila Aquino-Albert, suffered devastating defeat in Quezon City. Pimentel's attacks on the less-known Mindanao dynasties such as the Navarros and Plasas was largely successful. In the country as a whole, Cory's candidates did well, and the PDP-Laban was being converted into Mrs. Aquino's personal party, just like Marcos' discredited KBL, after the President had blessed a good many ex-KBL stalwarts with her endorsement. Also elected were several Marcos loyalists who had led

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

unsuccessful *coups* against Mrs. Aquino's government: General Rodolfo Aguinaldo, a fervent anti-Communist, was a runaway candidate for Governor in Cagayan, Col. Abadilla, accused of being Marcos' chief torturer, won as vice Mayor teamed with Marcosite Rodolfo Fariñas as Mayor of Laoag; Col. Orlando Dulay was victorious in his campaign for Governor in Quirino. Both Abadilla and Dulay ran from prison cells, from which they were unlikely to be released. The Osmeña clan reestablished its superiority over their historical rivals, the Cory-favored Cuencos in Cebu, but Osmeña was charged with the possession of a U. S. passport.

The two major election party casualties were Laurel's UNIDO and Enrile's GAD. Laurel's candidate for Governor was thrashed by Cory enthusiast Congressman Hernando Perez' candidate, while Enrile's candidate for Cagayan Governor lost to Lt. Col. Aguinaldo and even to his old Cagayan rivals the Dupayas. Salonga's re-established Liberal Party did well, though they lost in Manila. It seemed only a question of time before the old Nacionalista Party would also be re-established. Most of them had supported the GAD slate in the May 1987 elections in which they were cheated out of a half dozen Senate seats and badly defeated. Pro-bases Mayor Gordon was elected in Olongapo, site of Subic Naval base, anti-bases Abad Santos won in Angeles, home to Clark Air Base. Fortunately, at least three performers, rather than camp followers of the mighty, were elected: Johnny Frivaldo as Governor of Sorsogon, who defeated ex-K.B.L. and Cory-endorsed candidate Lee, San Luis as Governor of Laguna, who supported Cory but was an independent at heart, and Governor Joson of Nueva Ecija, who defeated one of Cory's greatest admirers, Noli Santos.

President Aquino Reshuffles Military Commands

A few days after the elections, major changes occurred in the Philippine military leadership. In the process, the political landscape was also transformed, converting General Ramos into a Presidential contender if not an aspirant. Apparently his appointment reflected the President's willingness to run the risk of building up Ramos as a political figure in order to make certain that the military would (1) be personally loyal to her and (2) fight its anti-insurgency war without endangering her prospects for the Nobel Peace Prize. Still, it also offered rare evidence of Presidential decisiveness, guardedly acknowledged by the *Globe* (1/23/88):

It is noteworthy that for so important a decision, the President has acted with resolve and swiftness, instead of with the wringing of hands and submission to the compulsion of events that have marked her familiar approach to decision-making. This may be because this shuffle had long been in the works and the announcement was simply the culmination of moves carefully worked out while the nation was distracted by the local elections.

Ramos was appointed *vice* Ileto, who resigned as Minister of Defense, complaining that Ramos had ignored his views on counter-insurgency. Friction between the two had long been known to insiders, and the change, despite

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

fervent published tributes to Ileto from both the President and Ramos, probably contributed to deepening the factional struggle in the AFP between generally older officers with a conservative and top-down approach to counter-insurgency, and younger officers with a more aggressive, locally-commended counter-insurgency attitude.

General Renato de Villa, who replaced Ramos, was considered his *bata*, and retired General Magno, Cory's personal military adviser at the Palace, is close to Ramos. Earlier, Ramos had rejected Presidential offers to become Public Works Secretary or an Ambassador, insisting on remaining with the military, which because he was on extended status, had fed the resentment of officers looking for promotion. With April approaching, when the Philippine Military Class of 1957 would be retired after thirty years service, there had been some public nervousness about what might be their attitude (hanging on?) as well as the impatience of later classes to take over. General Ramon Montano was named Chief of the Philippine Constabulary, General Eduardo Ermita as vice Chief of Staff, and Marine General Rodolfo Biazon as Capital Region Defense Command Chief. All the new appointments have demonstrated personal loyalty to the President in the past, and the tough Biazon had been in charge of the successful counterattack against Honasan. Senator Enrile, however, who had been replaced by Ileto as Defense Secretary in November 1986, claimed that Ileto's resignation diminished the stability of Mrs. Aquino's government and showed that "they are still grappling in the dark about how to defeat the insurgency."

. . . On January 21, the NPA boasted of the killing of over 100 policemen, soldiers and civilians in 1987, but announced that in 1988 its specially-trained assassins, the Sparrows, would be "more selective." They would "focus on more prominent people", amounting to "political statements" in which U. S. targets would be included.

Platt Says R. P. Economy Needs U. S. Bases; Sokolov Says they are Obsolete

Speaking before the American Chamber of Commerce on January 22, U.S. Ambassador Platt emphasized the contribution made by the U. S. bases to the Philippine economy. Platt estimated the bases' contribution at \$2.3 billion, consisting of close to one million pesos in salaries generated by 150,000 locally hired personnel, \$640 million in trade and \$200 million in new investments.

Apart from the assistance represented by these funds, the Ambassador pointed out the U. S. government's committed support of the Aquino government had led to several administrative decisions favorable to the Philippines, including a new bilateral textile and garment agreement which provided for a 35% increase in Philippine allocations worth \$600 million and a no-duty-treatment of Philippine coconut oil exports valued at \$350 million "at a time when assistance to other countries have been substantially cut." There had also been typhoon damage assistance, while American investors, "though some had been discouraged by the problems of peace and order," others continued their sup-

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

port: "those who have done business in the Philippines continue to agree that the country is a good place to invest in despite several distabilization attempts."

The American Ambassador thus continued to accentuate the positive, but press reaction was mixed. The *Chronicle* complimented the Ambassador for having developed a sense of humor ("From Stuffed Shirt to Jolly Good Fellow") and repeated several of his witticisms, but the *Globe* editorialized that Platt had shown himself less an economist than a strategist. Still, it welcomed what it called

a change of tack from telling us about how the bases ensure our national and Asian security to reminding us of our economic dependence on the bases. For this serves to transform the issue into bread-and-butter terms, instead of the sentimental arguments that have long been fed us.

However, a new player, not unexpectedly, had entered the debate: the suave ex-Minister to Washington, USSR Ambassador Oleg Sokolov. Questioned by a whole covey of reporters from the *Chronicle*, Sokolov insisted in a full-page interview that "the rationale for retaining the U. S. bases was becoming eroded." . . . Ambassador Platt had awakened Soviet Premier Gorbachev's clone in Manila, and the lines were drawn.

Land Reform or Collectivization?

On January 22, the anniversary of the Mendiola massacre of 1987, when Jaime Tadeo had flung his followers against Malacañang and been repulsed with a loss of nearly a score of lives, he was back with a less excitable crowd to demand land reform again. President Aquino responded by attending mass with Secretary of Agrarian Reform Juico and then apologized for the long delay in proclaiming the inclusion in CARP of the Cojuangco-owned *hacienda* Luisita. This, she promised, would now occur. Senator Alvarez and Representative Gillego then grabbed headlines with predictions that the Congress would pass a bill in two months. Though Juico claimed that his department was working hard and effectively on previously-assigned tasks, Jeremias Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers denounced as a waste the DAR's most recently-initiated activity of a P45 million information campaign, saying that "the best way for the DAR to 'sell' its program to farmers is to immediately resolve their complaints which have long been hibernating in its national and field offices." Such complaints included "non-issuance or cancellation of certificates of land transfer/emancipation patents, removal of "notoriously undesirable" DAR officials, and non-consultation with farmers' groups."

Other more serious problems have not yet surfaced. The most important is whether those in charge of CARP actually favor land reform or collectivization. The pressure for land reform in the Philippines has ever since Magsaysay's time been vigorous, at times intense, and the concept has usually enjoyed majority support, being blocked by minorities of landowners. Before 1987, it was consistently visualized as the establishment of individual small proprietorships.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

However, under President Aquino, herself one of the largest landowners in the country, a small but powerful minority has arisen for whom land reform actually means collectivization rather than private ownership. To conceal their preference for Communist-type collectivization, its sponsors have apparently contemplated temporary proprietorships that a swollen national bureaucracy would be tasked with providing the support services required by emancipated farmers. Such plans ignore the failure of the bureaucracy under Marcos to provide satisfactory services to its assigned clientele—one much less numerous and more homogenous than that contemplated by current legislative proposals. Such services (credit, irrigation, marketing) are absolutely vital elements in any successful land reform program, but if their sponsors are disguised collectivists, the legislation can be made to promote, first, plans for extending the government's responsibilities but ultimately to collectivization. After all, Nicaragua's agrarian collectivization is still called land reform. As in all Communist countries, land has been transferred not to individuals but to the state.

The two principal Congressional land reform proposals are both hag-ridden by the electoral demagoguery that sent both of their proponents into the Senate in May of 1987. Neither closely resembles the CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) developed by the group headed by technocrat Mahar Mangahas which sought to give effect to the Constitutional mandate for land reform. Each is tailored to promise far more than it seems possible to achieve, and each reflects efforts to square the circle of landowner resistance. Senator Alvarez' bill, allowing landowners to retain 7 to fifteen hectares, though it realistically acknowledges that land under cultivation to different crops probably requires different treatment, is so filled with loopholes that it amounts to an open invitation to cheat, while Senator Aquino's offers of full compensation for land to be taken from landowners requires sums impossible to finance. The Aquino proposal is far more Draconian in adopting a zero retention limit, but both ignore the fact that there is not enough land to distribute to all those without land, that only experienced farmers (not "the landless") stand a chance of surviving as landowners, and that it is income rather than ownership that is the key problem to be solved in reducing the gap between the rich and the poor. A third legislative proposal, which originates in the lower house, is fathered by Representative Gillego, who stands on the far Left of the political spectrum.

Since the Congress assembled, the debate on land reform has raged in the Congress and in the press without any perceptible progress. President Aquino has cannily tried to stay above the struggle, with the result that the *Leftist Chronicle* (12/13/87) bitterly assailed her lofty attitude:

The President, . . . has maintained her "hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil" stand on the agrarian reform issue, allowing "democratic forces" (which are proving more precisely to be the landed elite's forces) to battle it out in Congress. Furthermore, she has failed to take even the most minute, but important of steps by fulfilling the constitutional mandate to appoint the remaining peasant and other sectoral representatives to the lower chamber.

The *Chronicle* set forth its view of the relative merits of the Alvarez and

The Death of Jaime Ongpin and the 1988 Local Elections

Aquino proposals, and concluded:

... Senator Aquino's bill remains the more practical and "socially just" of the two pending bills. Senator Alvarez's bill is marred with potential loopholes and numerous exemptions from land transfer which could render the program impotent. On the other hand, given the attractive provisions of Senator Aquino's 100 per cent payment scheme is likely to be an incentive for landowners to accept the agrarian reform program.

Landowners have a bad name in the Philippines, and in many cases they deserve it. In other cases they do not. The author himself found USAID funds for a university survey in 1970 of attitudes toward land reform in Nueva Ecija.⁹⁴ In that survey, researchers discovered that there was no generalized hostility toward landowners, though much support for land reform (understood as individual proprietorships). Some of its current proponents advocate something which they call a land reform, but whose purpose is less reform than a program to liquidate landowners. In Ross Terrill's biography of Madame Mao of China, he writes that her purpose with land reform was "to have the landlords murdered",⁹⁵ and such Congressmen as Bonifacio Gillego, who has encouraged farmers to seize "unoccupied" lands and threatened landlords with bloody reprisals if they resist, may share Madame Mao's sentiments.

Leftists Keep Up their Pressure on Cory

The two year anniversary of the Aquino presidency was only a month away when the unceasing Leftist *critique* of her government was succinctly recapitulated (1/23/88) by the *Chronicle's* Far Left Paulynn Sicam. Her litany of complaints marks a logical point, following the elections of January 18 and the subsequent changes in military command, to conclude our chronological history. Discussing the decline in Cory's popularity, Sicam, to no one's surprise, finds the explanation in the President's alleged shift to the Right. The columnist first makes the absurd accusation that Mrs. Aquino "has been playing ball with the discredited remnants of the Marcos regime." (She *did* make a mistake in endorsing the candidacies of certain KBL candidates who seemed certain winners, but "playing ball" would include the [highly desirable] addition of competent ex-KBL ministers to her Cabinet.) Sicam next plays heroine: "We didn't risks our lives fighting the dictator for 14 years for this." (If she indeed risked her life, it was not as a journalist; could she have been a member of one of the subversive groups that deserved prosecution?) The columnist then shifts to criticism of Cory's *parientes* (probably only Butz is sufficiently Left for her approval), and

⁹⁴ The results were published in *View From the Paddy*, a volume edited by Fr. Frank Lynch, S.J. and Romana Pahilagan-de Los Reyes by the Ateneo de Manila in April 1972.

⁹⁵ *The White-Boned Demon* (1984), p. 15.

PRESIDENT AQUINO: SAINTHOOD POSTPONED

chides the President for failing to match anti-corruption rhetoric with action (a fair criticism) and for failing to push either land reform or higher wages for urban workers (by favoring landlords and employers). The gravamen of the Leftist charge, however, is that Cory is now said to favor military action against the NPA. According to Sicam, Cory “continues”

to allow the Armed Forces and other interested parties to dictate on her militarist counterinsurgency policies. Such policies merely kill communist rebels, government soldiers and non-combatants, constrict the democratic space she has created, and lead to the violation of human rights. But they do not bring us any closer to solving the injustices that have brought about the insurgency.

. . . This is the worldwide siren song of the Left, which has led much of the world into Communist dictatorships and in the Philippines now has the added attraction, at the Palace, of strengthening Cory’s campaign for the Nobel Prize: Communists are never conspirators nor assassins but always reformers seeking justice. Sicam speaks with the voice of not only the Filipino, but the world Left—Senators Kennedy, Cranston and Dodd in the U. S., Nicaragua’s Ortega, and the Communists in every other still non-Communist state under seige. It is a pity that she didn’t ask the opinions of the Boat People or the refugees from Afghanistan.

INTERMEZZO

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

Slogans and the Philippine Political Culture

There is no doubt that President Aquino was a believer in Democracy, theoretically Jeffersonian, but in fact plebiscitary, and in the legitimacy of revolution, a free press, free elections and free assembly, as well as a sweeping charter of citizens' rights. She believes that such policies will bring not only happiness but prosperity to her people. She scorns the Hamiltonian insistence that these rights must be limited if a polity is to survive: that a government that cannot govern (as the U. S. during the Articles of Confederation) cannot create a viable or prosperous state, that a free press can be so licentious as to betray a country to its enemies and to its own weaknesses, that elections can be a sham, that free assembly, not least in the treacherous form of "People Power," can paralyze government, and that in sanctifying only the rights of the individual and none of society, the subversives are encouraged to infiltrate and eventually seize the government, while to regard the armed forces with suspicion will only encourage them to believe that the government's leaders look upon them, rather than the Communists, as their enemy.

Special ambiguity shrouds the religious quality of the Aquino government. Cory listens to inner voices which presumably come directly from God. (Certainly she does not always adopt Cardinal Sin's policy tergiversations.)⁹⁶ As to economic policies, she wants "justice," variously defined. Private enterprise is a good thing, provided it shares its fruits properly with its workers. The government should insure free education and full employment. As for foreign policy, she does not insist on the elimination of the U. S. bases, but she prefers the U. N. (!) as a guarantor of Philippine independence. Foreign countries should, as a kind of reward or prize for her countrymen's virtues as manifested in its ejection of a "dictator", shower the Philippines with funds and private investors, apparently for the same reasons, should invest in the Philippines, undeterred by urban terror and kidnappings, uncooperative labor and the government's disposition to deal tenderly with the Communists.

The Aquino government is fertile with slogans and homilies, but only reluctantly acknowledges that the Philippine political culture is so corrupt that perhaps the Communists are correct in asserting that nothing but total revolution can reconstruct it. Any reform may be fated to founder on the "anarchy of warring families"; perhaps nothing less than the Khmer Rouge tactic—the

⁹⁶ Ian Buruma of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* pointed to one of the implications of divinely-inspired government: "After all, a leader chosen by God cannot simply give in to the pressure of troublemakers." *New York Review of Books*, June 11, 1987.

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

physical liquidation of the families (Cambodia eliminated perhaps a quarter of its population)—will solve the problem.

Winners and Losers

Every revolution has its winners and losers, but it is not always self-evident who wins and who loses at the time. In the “Revolution” of February 1986,⁹⁷ the Philippines won, because a hopelessly corroded and corrupted regime, having lost the Mandate of Heaven, collapsed, and its principal leaders fled the country. The United States, which had played an active part in unseating Marcos when it became clear (especially after Ninoy Aquino’s assassination) that Marcos had lost Heaven’s Mandate, also won, but its victory, despite the continuing Halleluja chorus of enthusiasts for the Cory government in the U.S., was reversed by subsequent developments. It should have been clear to conservatives throughout the world that the Leftist shift in gravity in Cory’s government meant not only a diminution of American influence in the Philippines, but also a sharp reversal in the prestige of the Reagan administration and conservative forces worldwide, as Mrs. Aquino demonstratively affirmed her beliefs in the doctrines proclaimed by the Kennedy wing of the Democratic party in the United States.

The Bases First wing of the American Republican Party, for which the Pentagon was the principal spokesman, mistakenly focused on the bases *per se*, rather than on the political complexion of the Aquino government, taking what comfort it could from Mrs. Aquino’s slogan of “keeping her options open.” Because of the insistence of the U. S. State Department that support for Mrs. Aquino was the way not only to “restore democracy” in the Philippines, but more dubiously, to strengthen the likelihood that the bases would continue to be accessible to the United States, it took fifteen months or so for knowledge to penetrate that Mrs. Aquino’s formulation was a rhetorical device whose substance would be determined not by what American policy-makers calculated would be her preferences, but by the “correlation of forces” in the Philippines, and that there had been a basic shift to the Left, hence unfavorable to U. S. retention of the bases, as a result of the first months of the new regime. Liberating the Communists from jail had not only given them a respectability they did not deserve and complicated the defense of the internal security of the country, but most important of all, suddenly presented the Communist front organs with a platform that it will be impossible to withdraw. It was as if Whittaker Chambers had been found guilty of libel by the American courts, and Alger Hiss, the Soviet spy and traitor, restored to his posts of responsibility. Cory’s acts and statements made the Left, including the extreme Left, not only respectable but patriotic.

⁹⁷ The events of February 1986 of course, amounted in fact not to a revolution, which means a change of governing class, but a successful rebellion, substituting a new set of leaders from the same class.

Slogans, Character and the Philippine Political Culture

Some of this was inevitable, once the decision had been made (which, to repeat, was correct) to support Mrs. Aquino against President Marcos' unsalvageable regime. What was unnecessary, mischievous and potentially fatal, was the unequivocal, enthusiastic support by the U. S. State Department after the Leftist policies and personnel of Mrs. Aquino's government had revealed themselves. This critic has no doubt that all-out approval was based on the belief that nothing less could justify its role in driving Mr. Marcos from power, not least because he had claimed that the U. S. bases and the fight against Communist subversion was dependent on his continued tenure of office. That claim was false, but his prediction that Mrs. Aquino would in turn be replaced by the Communists had substance, and his warning that the future of the bases would be endangered was not exaggerated. Whatever the earlier basis for President Marcos' assertion that he was indispensable, his arguments on the increased vulnerability of the bases under Aquino could have been disproved only by greater official opposition to President Aquino's Leftist associates and policies.

The fact is that by its policy of unequivocal support of Mrs. Aquino's policies and administration, the United States has not only endangered the bases, but has irrevocably driven the Philippines further in the direction of a Cuban/Nicaraguan *dénouement* against which even continued possession of the bases is not a guarantee. For different reasons, neither Clark Field nor Subic Bay can be defended against a hostile public opinion and a Leftist-oriented government in a war with the NPA's and the dissident Muslims. The example of Guantanamo, the American base in Cuba, is without value as a precedent.

The biggest winners are the anti-American nationalists (inevitably, *most* of the nationalists) who are in the saddle under Mrs. Aquino. Whatever delusions she or we may nurture, the bases are on their way out, despite the likelihood that as of now, their continued presence would almost certainly be approved in a national plebiscite. Constitutional provisions, sabotage and Leftist appeals to People's Power will mean their disappearance even if the author has heard one Leftist intellectual say that continued occupancy at a cost of, say, eleven billion dollars would be acceptable!

It seems likely that the CIA must share the responsibility for Aquino-at-any-price policies. There is of course no reason that the CIA should be wiser than the State Department, but it is presumably better acquainted with the techniques and progress of Communist infiltration.

Values and the Philippine Nation

Anyone who believes that the Philippine political culture has been fundamentally altered by the People's Revolution of 1986 is deluded. Slogans are not principles, let alone facts. Family loyalties still prevail over the requirements of the political order. Catholicism, despite many true devotees, is as often a cloak for personal motives (graft or revolution), as behaviour based on the Encyclicals. Criminals evade arrest or punishment. The *lex talonis* is the prevailing norm, and

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

assassination has become the preferred form of politics by Left and Right alike. Before the present regime, political murders were rare except during elections. Since, assassinations are nearly as frequent between as during elections. The criminal, and often the civil law is distorted, evaded or mocked. The Marcos judiciary rendered tainted verdicts, but despite post-Marcos improvements in its personnel, it is still crippled by subjection to personal obligations, bribery and intimidation, or technicalities. The brilliant Nations article cited elsewhere has this to say about the condition of democratic institutions in the Philippines following the Revolution which elevated Mrs. Aquino to the Presidency:

... most Filipinos willfully confuse Aquino's popularity with democracy, and cheerfully embrace the jerry-built Aquino dispensation that if anything has accelerated the decay of the Philippines' once-proud democratic institutions. Take the Supreme Court. Aquino has replaced most Marcos-appointed judges, but the judiciary itself has taken another giant step toward sycophancy. Similarly, Aquino's purge of the bureaucracy has confirmed its abdication, and the power grab of local offices by "officers-in-charge" from the winning side has further undermined public respect for the electoral process.

As the late, great Rafael Salas described it, Philippine society must choose between two sets of values:

On the traditional side are the dominant beliefs that power and authority are legitimate in and of themselves and inhere in persons rather than in more impersonal institutions or offices; that flamboyant consumption is a mark of power; that the environment is largely unpredictable and not wholly knowable, with a premium placed on craftiness, luck and personal and family attachments as primary means to advance personal interests; that interpersonal harmony must be preserved and in situations where personal strains and tension occur, justice is achieved by "fixing"—the *ayos* in the national language.⁹⁸

In contrast to these traditional views, we can identify a series of beliefs that have been characteristic of modernizing societies regardless of prevailing political ideologies and structures. In this cluster we find that power or authority is inherent in positions and institutions rather than in persons or families, that there is a clear distinction between public and private property, and that in the use of public property, officials are publicly accountable; that the environment is viewed as knowable and partly controllable, with individual interests advanced through rational planning, hard work and frugality, that in resolving tensions there is an impersonal, just mechanism, that adjudicates without bias towards status, position or personal wealth.⁹⁹

Salas' view—that the Philippines cannot progress, let alone prosper, without a radical modification of its regnant values and behavioral modes—is now widely

⁹⁸ Anyone who doubts that Senator Aquino remained a traditional rather than a reborn Filipino democrat should re-read this paragraph and then compare it with what he told journalist Zeitlin: "Ninoy believed that if he ever achieved power, he would rule off the top of his head." (See footnote No. 85, Chapter X).

⁹⁹ "The Salas View," by Alfredo Navarro Salanga, *Manila Times* (10/30/86).

Slogans, Character and the Philippine Political Culture

accepted. It is the thesis of the author's *President Marcos and the Philippine Political Culture*, and a visiting journalist, James Fallows, in the November 1987 issue of the influential *Atlantic Monthly* has sounded the identical refrain in a pessimistic article which he called *A Damaged Culture*. More embarrassingly, in early December, an Australian representative of the respected *Australian Financial Review* was first expelled, then reprieved, for reporting that no business transaction between Australians and Filipinos occurred without bribery. But more important than the prevalence of corruption, however, was Fallow's argument that the American government's continuous peacens of praise for the Aquino government militated against improvements in the culture:

Out of respect for *delicadeza*, or from a vague sense of guilt that the former colony is still floundering, or because of genuine fondness for the Filipino people, the United States tolerates polite fictions about the Philippines that it would ruthlessly puncture if they concerned France or even Mexico. . . . It seems to me that the prospects for the Philippines are about as dismal as those for, say, South Korea are bright. In each case the basic explanation seems to be culture: in the one case a culture that brings out the productive best in the Koreans (or the Japanese, or now even the Thais), and in the other a culture that pulls many Filipinos toward their most self-destructive, self-defeating worst.

Alone of outside observers, Fallows presciently posed the farther question of what may be expected if American policies are successful in keeping President Aquino's government in power:

America knows just what it will do to defend Corazon Aquino against usurpers, like those who planned the last attempted coup. We'll say that we support a democratically chosen government, that this one is the country's best hope, that we'll use every tool from economic aid to public-relations pressure to help her serve out her term. But we might start thinking ahead, to what we'll do if the anti-coup campaign is successful—to what will happen when Aquino stays in, and the culture doesn't change, and everything gets worse.

How far the United States had already gone in this direction was spelled out by Kit Tatad in the *Globe* (12/31/87):

When [Mrs. Aquino's] . . . political base seemed to erode and her government appeared on the verge of collapse, the US State Department came on the scene and threatened to cut off all US aid if she was toppled in a coup d'etat. At one point she seemed to derive greater support from the United States than from her own country, but she succeeded in parlaying this foreign popularity into some kind of domestic support. The forecast was that if she remained in power until the yearend, she would muddle through. This may be all she is doing.

Judged by Salas' second set of criteria, Philippine society has only marginally improved under President Aquino and will not further improve in the absence of thoroughgoing reconstruction. As a visiting *balikbayan* expressed it to columnist Vince Francisco less than five months after the Revolution, "people in Manila seemed to be back at their old tribal and feudal hostilities, warring and carping,

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

hating, settling old scores, sunk in adversary politics and vendettas, interested only in dividing the spoils. Also, engaging in sedition and police brutality.”¹⁰⁰

The authoritarian model for a reconstructed society has been discredited because President Marcos converted it into an instrument for family domination and looting, but as President Aquino’s administration demonstrates, the model persists, answering to Philippine psychological needs and historical conditioning. Encouraged by a coterie of Palace courtiers, male and female, and secure in her asserted moral eminence, President Aquino saw no need of an Opposition nor even for (unsolicited) advice, and her appointees prefer to invoke her authority to making decisions based on the requirements of a more egalitarian society. The President is encouraged in her arrogance by the traditionally reciprocal attitudes of submission to Malacañang by political lieutenants and family combinations.

Much Philippine nationalism is still a mask for seizing foreigners’ assets, whether strategic (the bases), economic (businesses) or cultural (the media dialectic) for the personal benefit of the despoilers. Until Filipino nationalists offer greater evidence that they are more committed to the progress of the nation than to themselves and their families (by refusing to give and receive office and graft, by paying their taxes, by obeying the law, by laying aside their guns and goons), their motives will continue to be suspect. Nationalists are nonetheless certain winners, and foreigners certain losers. Big losers like the Americans may be replaced by unfamiliar winners (Cam Ranh Bay replaces Subic, Clark Field becomes Joma Sison Air Base). To the nationalists’ utter amazement (and in a few cases disappointment), the Yankees will depart, their colonial experiment and their efforts at nation-building both disappointments.

Pascal’s Leap

Blaise

To the great French philosopher ~~Henri~~ Pascal, faith in Christianity required a leap into the void, trusting that God was there to receive the gambler. The Filipinos are believers in miracles, as well as gamblers. President Aquino took Pascal’s leap in the faith that her own moral superiority, divine help, the counsels of largely Jesuit wise men, and support from wealthy businessmen and human rights enthusiasts would make possible a Leftist Catholic government which would lead the nation to the greatness presaged by EDSA’s shining moments.

This observer, despite his criticisms, is sympathetic—but very skeptical. The Philippines was adequately ruled chiefly by priestly orders for three hundred years. It is not impossible that it could be so governed again. One’s skepticism is certainly based on no denigration of Filipinos or their talents. As Max Soliven has truly written: “We have the skills. We have the talent. But these seem to full flower only abroad. They wither in the climate of favoritism and cronyism that prevails in the Philippines. When you can no longer advance on merit but only on

¹⁰⁰ Manila Times (7/10/86). On February 1, 1988, a year and a half later, Hector Villanueva rendered a verdict hardly more favorable.

Slogans, Character and the Philippine Political Culture

'connections', the best and brightest leave our shores to find fulfillment and reward in another land.'" Skepticism, therefore, arises primarily from the failure of the Philippines so far to offer any evidence that it has adopted Salas' recommended values for development, and by signs that, as expressed by the *balik-bayan*, the Old Adam has reasserted itself. In the column cited above, Francisco doubted the moral rebirth of Philippine society:

EDSA was perhaps one of those quirky pieces of luck with which our history abounds. It was the kind of instinctive improvisation we Filipinos come up with every so often to save ourselves in the nick of time.

They used to be (and are still being) called miracles, like the miracles of La Naval, still commemorated with the procession of the Holy Rosary, when the Dutch fleet was defeated in Manila Bay, and all the other times Manilans were spared from pillage and massacre by the Virgin of Antipolo. . .

We say we want Freedom, Justice and Democracy, but more and more we see that those are just big words that look good on a placard or a streamer. In reality, they are only coverups for our own untidy and corrupt lives. We give the words the meaning we like. . .

We are alone with ourselves because the Hated One is gone. But we don't like what we see in the mirror. It is the face of the Hated One that stares back at us. The features we detested (greed, vanity, cruelty, selfishness) are there on our faces too. We are as corrupt and stupid and blind as he was.

The Indonesian Model

The authoritarian leader Marcos has failed; liberal democracy (or clerical democracy) is being tested and failing. One nearby model has not yet been tried, though many of Cory's crusaders have inaccurately applied it to the Marcos administration: a military regime. This is the Indonesian model, where the Army is not merely in charge, but actually mans all the important government posts. It is accompanied, in the case of Indonesia, by great graft, but it is apparently compatible with certain developmental goals. Despite corruption, Indonesian society and the Indonesian economy have apparently made steady progress under General Suharto and his generals.

It seems unlikely, however, that the Philippines could adopt the Indonesian model. Apart from the blow Marcos delivered to military-supported authoritarianism, certain of the institution of traditional Philippine democracy, such as elections and a licentious press, are too firmly rooted in the Philippines.

Still, there is one possible variation on the Indonesian model which is not impossibly far-fetched. The armed forces, whatever General Ramos' personal preferences, might eventually become so alienated by the Aquino government's failure to deal with the Communist insurgency (particularly the assassinations, by NPA "Sparrow" squads, of uniformed personnel¹⁰¹) that it would revolt,

¹⁰¹ This is one dimension of government in which the Marcos regime was far superior to

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

unseat her government, and call in a hard-nosed, can-do *civilian* to head the government. The only civilian qualified to discharge such responsibilities is Eduardo Cojuangco, President Marcos' wealthy crony and President Aquino's cousin who possesses a remarkable combination of ability, drive, self-confidence and ruthlessness. Cojuangco has a trained private army, and could count on support from the Marcos loyalists, some groups in Mindanao and Palawan and perhaps personally friendly politicians like Mitra, besides being in a position to split the Cojuangco-Aquino family party. His would presumably be an authoritarian, no-nonsense government that would be bitterly opposed by the human righters, but probably welcomed by businessmen, discouraged technocrats, and those church leaders who deplore the continuing growth in the strength of the NPA/NDF.

Something on this order seems to be visualized by Col. Honasan and his cohorts—erecting a citadel sufficiently isolated from the political culture by its members' vow of superior virtue, dedication and discipline. The problem has been that the military community itself reflects the surrounding political culture, with its favoritism, graft and personal loyalties to family and political sponsors. For a group like Honasan's to aspire to create an idealistic society within a social system so fully sharing the weaknesses of the national society seems a daunting enterprise. Still, there have been successful civic initiatives on a narrower front, like that taken to reform and upgrade the government's civil cadres by O. D. Corpuz' executive development training at the Development Academy of the Philippines. It is not impossible, however improbable, that the RAM could have a similar effect on the armed forces.

. . . Seen from a Philippine Communist perspective, adoption of the Indonesian model would be welcome as the next stage in a crumbling capitalist regime which, unable to solve the nation's problems, would, by bottling up and brutalizing dissent, produce the ingredients for an explosion offering the Communist Party its opportunity to launch the successful violent revolution predicted by the Leninists as in the end inevitable.

The Real Revolution to Come?

It is the author's contention that the Aquino government is viewed by the world Communist movement as its Kerensky, or *bourgeois* revolution, which doctrine demands they must now convert into a more fundamental (Leninist)

Mrs. Aquino's Presidency. As David Nelson Rose wrote ten years ago in *National Review* (6/22/77):

"there is today under martial law a much broader and more widespread possession of human rights by ordinary people than at almost any time since the constitution of the Philippine Republic was adopted. . . For example—and not unrelated to the fact that a considerable number are imprisoned without recourse to the writ of *habeas corpus*—the normal incidence of political assassinations in the Philippines has been lowered to the vanishing point."

Slogans, Character and the Philippine Political Culture

revolution which will destroy the *bourgeoisie*, who have made the People Power revolution. The Communists are in no way dogmatic about the instruments or the tactics to be used in accomplishing their purposes, as no two revolutionary situations are the same. Armed peasants in China, armed workers militia in Czechoslovakia, urban workers and disaffected military in Russia, guerilla forces supported by outside media in Cuba—these and many others offer successful examples and suggest others to choose from.

President Aquino restored the Communist leaders to their positions of authority, allowed or encouraged her governmental machinery to be infiltrated by pro-Communists, and encouraged factionalism in the armed forces. The Catholic Church and Cardinal Sin have tolerated extensive infiltration, accomplishing much that the Communists could not have achieved without their blessing. Meanwhile, the Communists terrorize the countryside, establish urban safe houses and first assassinate those whose death they hope will be welcomed, next their own who have become disaffected, reserving general terror until the day of triumph. Meanwhile, they will continue to carp that Cory does nothing for the poor (which is true, as Sister Tan has said) and that her real allegiance is to the rich—especially her family and cronies. Demonstrations of armed force will be mounted against weak points in the hinterland; entire towns will be seized as long as Cory continues to identify her own armed forces as the chief enemy. Called enemies, they will respond by becoming enemies.

The NDF continues its assault in the political field. It has succeeded in electing sympathizers to the Congress (Bonifacio Gillego has actually recommended a coalition government with the NDF), and these “nationalists” will feel they must justify their name by moving first to neutralize and then to eliminate the U. S. bases. The Philippine democracy which Secretary Schultz praises so highly will prove powerless to defend the nation against the Communists. Economic recovery will fall far short of promoting the employment which would limit Communist recruitment or defend the standard of living.

The stage for the second (Leninist) act of the revolution is being set. Its timetable is flexible, and nothing decisive is being done to prevent the play from opening. Neither moral homilies nor piety, and least of all unction, offer protection. Unction, however, *does* promote the delusion of Communist morality. As observed above, a Communist Opposition first murders the bullies, the criminals and the greedy, postponing general terror until it seizes power. The Filipino Maoists treasure the example set by Mao's early regime, as described by Paul Jonhson:

Mao and the other Communist war-lords, who held down about 30 million people in five provinces during 1929-30, did not rape or loot on the whole, and they suppressed gambling, prostitution and opium poppy-growing. On the other hand they ill-treated and murdered members of the middle classes, destroyed official documents, land deeds and titles, and burned churches, temples and other places of worship, slaughtering priests and missionaries.¹⁰²

¹⁰² *Modern Times* (1983), p. 201

1989: A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT

More Psywar Against the RAM?

The Aquino government anticipated, by a few days, the second annual celebration of its People Power Revolution by announcing what to most observers appeared to be a trumped-up charge against Navy Captain (and RAM leader) Robles, whom the NBI's Carpio accused of responsibility for the assassination of the Kilusan Mayo's Olalia. The President then announced that she was glad the case had been solved! GAD representative Francisco Tatad called attention to the utility to the regime, after the RAM's refusal to participate in the celebrations, of further disgracing the RAM leaders who had helped make the Revolution possible. It now only remained to find General Ramos guilty of something reprehensible for Cory's civilian advisers to complete their purge of the AFP and install "Yellow" generals in place of those so conveniently discredited.

* * * * *

As the second year of the Aquino government drew to a close, its most visible assets were its international support and the fading but still substantial popularity of its leader.

THE AQUINO PRESIDENCY (II)



One of the Aquino administration's few real assets was Vicente Jayme, who inherited the **pariente**-ridden Department of Public Works from Rogaciano Mercado.

Solarz was back again in August to pat President Aquino approvingly on the shoulder.



(Below left) Secretary of State Shultz said he was welcoming the rain, but his gesture seemed more a **salaam** after the obsequious homage he paid to President Aquino. (Below right) Senate President Salonga with three influential (non-**tuta**) Senators: Tañada, Mercado and Maceda.



The Femintern



Zamboanga Coconut Queen Maria Clara Lobregat congratulates Bishop Escaler on his release by Muslim captors.



Nikki Coseteng (left) campaigns in Cebu and (right) as Congresswoman, denounces pornography.



Detectives try to pry Noel Soriano loose from defenders Tinging Cojuangco and Reli German.



Aquino—Macapagal: Popsy Aquino and Gloria Macapagal lead anti-Marcos demonstration.

Gomez and Sancho—you'd better listen—or else.



(Left) Chief teacher-agitator Loretta Ann Rosales lays down the law. (Middle) Apostol—she just bubbles with energy. (Right) Verano Yap—she just bubbles with energy.

Enemies & Friends



(Clockwise from top) GAD losers Gamboa, Adaza and Espina were still talking about being cheated, but no one would listen, so Tatad, Adaza and others took their case to Washington and U.S. Senator Helms. Bonifacio Gillego, who had chiefly campaigned on the issue of the Marcos war medals, was a former military officer with one foot at least in the Communist camp. He recommended joint government with the National Democratic Front. Journalist and TV talk show host Louie Beltran led a charmed life until he accused Cory of hiding under her bed. Cardinal Sin, in Moscow, was greatly impressed by his warm reception and always ready for a joke, he placed his Cardinal's skullcap on a young friend.



Again, the Communists



The NPA's continued their depredations in the countryside: every effort to unleash the AFP was denounced by the Human Righters, and photographs of armed rebels in Negros were always dramatic.

The urban terrorists ("Sparrows") were also doing their thing. In June, they liquidated Capt. Ernesto Nasario, (**below**). In August Jaime Ferrer (**left**), the first Cabinet Minister ever to be assassinated, probably by Muntinlupa prison hired killer.





All the panelists (from upper left, clockwise) Guingona, Tripon, Father Lambino, Garcia, Canonigo, Factoran, Nemenzo, Miranda denied they were Communists but proudly claimed the name of "Progressives."



Joker Arroyo and Sister Dimaranan lead human righters in Communist salute.

New Friends



Ambassador Nicholas Platt (**top left**) arrives and (**top right**) presents his credentials. The accompanying story accurately reported: "Platt Vows Support for Cory." (**Right**) After the **Welga ng Bayan** (general strike), General Lim to KMU's Roda (**right**): "It's about time we asserted the authority of the government." (**Below**) Senator Manglapus appears to enjoy the F-4 cockpit, but General Snyder (right) is fooling himself if he thinks he made a convert to U.S. base retention.



(**Opposite page, clockwise from top**)

The two Opposition Senators wage a lonely battle against the administration in Congress. At top, Senator Estrada, a novice in the Congress, duels with Senator Saguisag, who is captured in a characteristic mouth-open pose. Congresswoman Tessie Aquino Oreta, Ninoy's sister, attacks President Aquino's Cabinet Members Arroyo and Locsin. Called before Congress to testify, Arroyo is accompanied by Locsin, who provides moral, not oral support. Arroyo denounces businessmen Buenaventura, Concepcion, Navarro. Senator Ponce Enrile quizzes Mary Concepcion Bautista on the activity of her Commission on Human Rights. A picture of frustration, Salvador Mariño fails to bring Liberal Party leaders Salonga and Kalaw together.

The Parliamentary Struggle



Gringo's Putsch



This photo, from the glory days of the February 1986 Revolution, is full of symbolic meaning. While Enrile addresses the crowd, General Ramos has his hand on Gringo Honasan's arm.



Honasan makes his move—at first successfully. Here rebel troops defiantly guard gates of Villamor Air base.



Honasan's **putsch** fails; he withdraws, and those slain among the Presidential Security Guard are carried away.

After the Putsch



Still making mischief from Honolulu, ex-President Marcos and Mrs. Marcos celebrate his 70th birthday.



Another of Mrs. Aquino's enthusiasts, Leftist American Senator Allan Cranston arrived after the failed coup and astonishingly declared her government "stronger than ever."



Ambassador Platt signs a USAID loan guarantee with Metropolitan Bank President (and former Central Bank Governor) Andres Castillo (right).



Acting Metro Manila Mayor Lopez, appointed by the Administration, whoops it up for Cory after the failed coup, in which he and Makati Governor Binay (to Lopez' right) accompanied by their armed security guards appeared carrying Uzis and playing soldier.

After the Putsch



(Above) This tough guy is Col. Balbas of the Marines, who re-took Camp Aguinaldo from Gringo. (Top right) General Ramos, General Ermita and President Aquino here seem to be trying to see into the future. (Below) She is again assured by Assistant Secretary of State Sigur and Ambassador Platt of unqualified U.S. support. (Right) President Aquino speaks with Camarines Sur Governor Luis Villafuerte, Rep. Orlando Andaya and Agriculture Secretary Dominguez against the dramatic background of a bridge dynamited by the NPA in the Bicol.



The NPAs Again



(Above) One of four Americans killed by the NPA at Clark Air Base north of Manila lies dead while President Aquino (right) mends fences with her military in Cebu. She is accompanied by Bishop Tumulok, Tourism Secretary Gonzales and Labor Secretary Drilon.



President Aquino appears at Clark Field in order to comfort the wives of the American service men assassinated, but finds time for a light moment with General Snyder and American Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Quinn.

Disasters



Jaime Ongpin, whose strange and tragic death dealt the Aquino Administration a crippling blow. These young fellows, the PMA cadets, were still a force to be placated as 1987 ended.



Chronicle's Albert Ruiz incorporates confusing symbolism in a powerful cartoon which shows the ship Paz (peace) with its dove-shaped stern sinking into a sea of 1987 calamities for the Aquino government.



A priest gives the last blessings to the remains of the victims of the sinking of M/V Doña Paz as some relatives watch. www.PhilippineAmericanHistory.com

Book II

FROM SAINT TO SINNER
(1989 - 1992)

Chapter XII

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

When the RAM plotters struck again on November 30, 1989, the Aquino government, after three years and nine months in power, was already a moral disaster, its government agencies a shambles, and its political institutions gravely weakened where not discredited. It was sustained only by desperate American support, by the absence of credible alternative leaders, and the greed of most of the high officials of the swollen Aquino government and their media flacks. Mrs. Aquino was either blind or indifferent to the corruption, ineffectiveness and moral bankruptcy of most of her government's agencies. It was therefore quickly brought to the point of collapse by the revolt, and rescued only by President Bush's decision to utilize the U.S. Air Force to intervene against the RAM mutineers.

The problem was no longer, as it had been two years earlier, the presence of Leftists in the Aquino government. Most of them had been removed from positions of authority, though not of influence. The problem was that government agencies did not deliver what they were expected to provide—the police could not protect ordinary citizens from criminals, nor themselves from NPA Sparrow liquidation squads, the Department of Justice did not provide justice; all major offenders went unpunished, not infrequently because the President had the habit of declaring them innocent before they were apprehended or charged. The Department of Transportation and Communications did not provide transportation for ordinary citizens but promoted monopolies which rewarded cronies or Presidential relatives and penalized commuters. Overseeing communications, the department pursued the same policies of relying on monopolies owned by Presidential relatives. The Department of Education, top-heavy with high-salaried executives, could not pay its school teachers a living wage, but it and other government offices spent generously for foreign travel or luxury cars for high officials. The Department of Finance received only 50% of the earnings of its overseas workers because the Department of Labor could not police its own ranks, etc., etc. Not a single department enjoyed the confidence of those it was supposed to serve.*

The Legislature was equally unregenerate. If anything was crystal clear, it was that all but a minority of the Aquino government's legislators considered themselves above the law, and entitled to abuse, rather than to serve, those who elected them. Salaries had been greatly increased to limit stealing, but hidden perquisites were now as notorious as the unsavory Congressional "allowances" in the Bad Old Days of Marcos. Most legislators felt entitled not only to luxurious automobiles but security guards armed to the teeth with high-powered assault

* There were those who considered the Department of Health, headed by the puissant Dr. Alran Bengson, an exception.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

weapons justified as necessary protection, but utilized for intimidation. Guns, goons and gold decided as many elections as in the days of the Monster. The Senators, most of whom rode reform issues (human rights, land reform, Marcos loot) or clung to the skirts of Mrs. Aquino in her days of glory just long enough to be elected, were less corrupt but more arrogant. Nearly all were running for President, so they felt obliged to strike moral poses, whether or not they behaved morally. They were ultra-Nationalists even if their people starved. On the other hand, the President's defenders blamed everybody but the President, whatever her errors or omissions, or the sins of her relatives, ignoring the supreme governing principle of command responsibility.

Even the incompetence of most of her appointees and the agencies of her government was not the cardinal sin (no pun intended) of the Aquino government. It was its total failure to ease the lot of the poor, for whom the President had words of sympathy but provided no relief. Her administration, in composition and sympathies, was an upper-class government, solicitous of their class interests from economic privilege to tax evasion. It drew its strength from a combination of civil rights lawyers strangely allied with millionaires. (There were admittedly 152 Congressmen [76%] who were millionaires.) They favored legislation biased against the poor, who are discriminated against and defenseless against their exploiters. Government employment for Aquino supporters has expanded exponentially as living standards for all but the rich were depressed. It was a tragedy that the only effective champions of the poor, however subversive their motives, were the Communists. Perhaps the most striking political fact was that the thieving Marcos administration took more effective steps (as acknowledged by the World Bank) to ameliorate the lot of the poor—by social pricing, the Metro Manila aides, tuition subsidies, agricultural credit for small farmers and job-creating rural infrastructure. Whatever the kick-backs or political purposes served by those measures, the poor benefited from them. Even land reform and the cooperative movement (*samahang nayon*), though they stagnated after the first few years, did infinitely more for the poor farmers than the inflated rhetoric of the Aquino government.

As for the much-ballyhooed determination of the Aquinistas to recover the Marcos plunder, the experiences of the PCGG proved two things (1) that even the most conscientious public servants prefer ballyhoo, which generates votes, to the unrelenting vigilance and patient toil that actually *recovers* stolen wealth, and (2) that the search for plunder attracts those who see an opportunity to hijack stolen wealth rather than to return it to the Philippine Treasury. In the Aquino government, there were probably more crooks looking for a chance to steal a part of the loot than to recover it for the benefit of their plundered country.

Milestones on the Road to Perdition: The Rowe Assassination

The first week in April 1989 saw published a judgment by the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy of Hong Kong that despite corruption and ineffi-

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

ciency, there were no major external threats to the stability and peace of the Philippines. A few days later, a week after President Aquino had rejected the NDF's offer of a ceasefire in return for a pledge to dismantle the U.S. military bases in 1991, U.S. Army Col. James Rowe, a much-decorated Viet Nam POW, assigned as senior military officer at JUSMAG, was assassinated just outside his office in Quezon City. The NPA gloatingly claimed responsibility for this act of terror and promised more to come. (Sixteen months later, the perpetrators were still at large, though some arrests had been made, and certain suspects identified.) The usual reassuring noises were heard from the AFP. PC Chief Major General Ramon Montaña offered comfort by saying that the assassination was really an NPA admission that it was losing the war in the countryside. Senator Ponce Enrile scoffed at the AFP claim, and called attention to the fact that during his watch, no American military officer had been killed by the rebels. NPA chief Romulo Kintanar, who had escaped from AFP custody (perhaps in exchange for the release of several AFP personnel) proudly identified himself as the mastermind of the kill.

From the AFP viewpoint, Col. Rowe's death had its compensations. The shipment of more U.S. military equipment, from helicopters to tanks, was ordered rushed to the Philippines.

President Aquino Accepts Press Secretary's Resignation

President Aquino, who regarded her alleged personal popularity as the most important asset of her administration, had blamed Press Secretary Teddy Boy Benigno for her fading popularity and chided him in public for his alleged incompetence, leaving him no dignified alternative to resignation. In mid-April, he took the step. There had been criticism of Benigno from some newspapermen, a few of whom may have been angling for his job, but most commiserated with him on his thankless task. One of them even called him a "gentleman"—an unusual compliment in the jungle of Philippine journalism. However, one of the Opposition's leading spokesman, Kit Tatad, in yet another bitter criticism of corruption under Aquino, wrote (*Globe*, 5/7/89):

Not a single crook has been sacked for corruption. Some are allowed to resign only to be recycled into other jobs as soon as it was felt the public had forgotten. . . . Many, ensconced in their obscure offices or protected by the glare of their titles, are robbing the till blind—and the Commission on Audit is there to document the crime—but she seems much too comfortable with the criminals. She says *nobody* has accused *her* of corruption. Well, she hasn't been listening.

The latest resignation, that of the press secretary, did not speak of immorality or corruption. It was an off-shoot of presidential bad manners.

Equally significant was a rueful comparison between Japan and the Philippines made by Cory's staunch supporter, *Mr. and Ms.* After Ihei Aoki, confidential aide to Prime Minister Takeshita, committed suicide when his chief was forced to resign, it commented (5/16/89):

This illustrates why the Japanese are superior to the Filipinos. . . . The

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

slightest link to irregularities relating to integrity and honor is enough reason for resignation from a government official's post, particularly high government posts. Not so in this country. No matter how patent and obvious the high government official has been using his position for personal aggrandizement, a thousand carabaos wouldn't be able to pull him down from his post. "Produce the evidence. Prove it," is the standard . . . response. There lies the great difference. The Japanese will have his honor first but the Filipino, his money.

London *Economist* Reports Philippine Progress

The May 7 London *Economist*, however, was temporarily upbeat on President Aquino. Pointing out that after delaying for months a necessary decision to fire her old friend Joker Arroyo, who had proved to be a major obstacle to efficient government management, she had finally replaced him with a draft of technocrats:

The present team makes real pretensions to cohesion and efficiency and is therefore reasonably acceptable to the two groups, the military and business, who had grown most exasperated with Mrs. Aquino's indecisiveness. . .

No longer does she believe that her sincerity alone will tempt the insurgents down from the hills. Indeed, she had moved steadily to the right—far enough in her praise of the armed forces to deny Mr. Enrile political ground he once had to himself. Her administration now represents not so much human-rights activists as technocrats.

. . . This was a gross exaggeration. Government departments were inefficient and corrupt. Reform elements in the military were still unhappy with misgovernment.

Labor Day at the Palace, the Luneta and the American Embassy

President Aquino hosted a Labor Day breakfast for 150 labor leaders at the Palace, but she refused to endorse their demand for a P30 wage increase, offering them instead a P28 million livelihood support program which was received with a notable lack of enthusiasm. The President always showed remarkable firmness in holding down expenditures for workers' wages or increased government payments to rice farmers, measures which help to hold the line against general inflation at the cost of workers' and farmers' incomes.

On the same day, the radical *Kilusan Mayo Uno* (KMU) assembled 100,000 at the Luneta grandstand to hear its leader Crispin Beltran denounce the Aquino government as indifferent to the plight of the workers. Part of the audience then broke off to march a block to the American Embassy, where they had to be dispersed with tear gas and police truncheons. Protests against the government were more regularly being turned into demonstrations against the President's most visible and vociferous backer—the U.S. Government.

The Battle for Marcos' Body

The single most protracted struggle waged by Mrs. Aquino has been against the return, dead or alive, of ex-President Marcos. Any hope that after his death

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

in September, internment of his remains in the Philippines might also inter the unhappy legacies left by his government, was snuffed out when by a hair-line decision (8-7), the Supreme Court sustained the government's argument that return of either Marcos' person or body might destabilize the Aquino government. Somehow, the extraordinary extent of the government's weakness which its claim revealed attracted little attention. The court decision's narrow margin testified to the strength of the strong Filipino attachment to the tradition of burial at home whatever the decedent's life work.

Scandal of the Month: Garchitorena Land Scam

Another of President Aquino's personal favorites—Philip Juico, the wealthy Secretary of Agrarian Reform—blundered into a major scandal that broke later in May when it was discovered that Juico had approved for payment a grossly-exaggerated purchase price for near-worthless land—the Garchitorena estate, a cogon-overgrown tract of land in remote Camarines Sur. This land, acquired by Sharp Marketing International for P3.8 million, was to be bought by the Land Bank for P62.2 million! Selling the government over-priced land has traditionally been a profitable business in the Philippines, but the involvement of hitherto highly-regarded officials (Juico and Regional Director Salvador Pejo), the size of the fraud, and the aura of sanctity with which the administration had sought to invest its most highly-publicized reform problem blew this particular scandal up into truly frightening proportions. Though Juico rescinded the purchase order, Mrs. Aquino was this time unable to rescue one of her favorites. *Mr. and Ms.*, summarizing the threat the scandal represented to the administration, again contrasted Japanese and Filipino *mores*:

Anomalies and scandals such as this are the bane of President Aquino's rule and only serve to feed the Opposition with deadly ammunition to justify their call for snap elections and riddance of not only the corrupt people around the President but of the President herself. The Opposition has cried out for Juico's resignation. But they should know better. This is not Japan.

A Not-quite-United Opposition Coalesces

Opposition elements, in a noisy spectacle attended by 3500 delegates, gathered in late May to refound the Nacionalista party. Vice President Laurel was chosen party President, Blas Ople party Secretary, and nearly all the familiar figures from the Marcos party, the KBL, showed up: Ponce Enrile, Arturo Tolentino, Isidro Rodriguez, Nicanor Yñiguez, Rodolfo Albano, Jose Roño and Salvador Escudero. Several of them had also been members of the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) which contested the last Congressional elections, losing in that superbly-engineered scam which nearly blanked them in the Senate, though the exercise was erroneously called the "first truly free elections since before martial law". (*Economist*, May 7, 1988) Francisco Tatad, however,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

did not join the reborn *Nacionalista* party, preferring to continue as the leader of a small group of Catholic Socialist politicians, which he apparently hoped to build up with the assistance of a new, well-funded daily newspaper—*Newsday*. Even two years distant from the 1992 national elections, it was evident that Aquino's supporters would probably persuade her to run for re-election, and although no longer the choice of a majority, she could win a three-cornered race for the presidency.

President Renews Pledge to Check Corruption

One more moralistically-named organization, the National Coalition for Transparency, was the venue selected by President Aquino for yet another solemn pledge to do something about her government's moral shortcomings. This time, he vowed to wage a "relentless campaign to weed out the graft and corruption" now rampant. She acknowledged that "corruption had returned", but claimed, without offering any evidence, that it was "not on the same scale". She was particularly indignant that her critics in the Opposition had urged her to stop blaming Marcos for the sins of *her* government. She argued that her critics were chiefly the crooks who had battered off Marcos' depredations.

With total historical inaccuracy, Mrs. Aquino accused Marcos of having "institutionalized corruption at every level of government". (It had been institutionalized long before; government office had long been valued as a license to steal.) The big difference between Marcos and his predecessors was that he remained in office three times longer than any of them, and hence had more time to *systematize* his plundering of the nation. What President Aquino chose to ignore was the speed with which corruption had corroded her regime. In one-fifth of the time that Marcos had occupied office, her administration was saddled with corruption of dimensions that Marcos had only achieved in twenty years.

Still, no matter how often, like a reformed drunkard who repeatedly takes the pledge of sobriety, the moralizers at *Mr. and Ms.* were hopeful that this time, she would stay off the bottle:

Those who heard her felt that the President appeared very determined and deadly serious in going after the grafters this time, especially as it must have been painful to admit the existence of a high degree of corruption eroding her government. But in recognizing this black-mark on her administration, she is doing both herself and the country good, for then she can proceed with slaying this growing graft monster swiftly, directly and without mental reservations. . . Hopefully, the nation awaits the translation of her words into action.

IMF Critic Solita Monsod Resigns

In President Aquino's moralizing regime, few had resigned from a government position (though Jimmy Ongpin committed suicide) because of differences in principle with the President until Solita Monsod, head of the government's

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

economic planning agency and an IMF critic, took the plunge during the Ides of June. It was the spunky lady and tobacco addict who showed that lust for office was not the only motivating force among all the officials of the Aquino government. Citing "irreconcilable differences with other Cabinet members on economic policy, negotiating strategy and the definition of national interest", Solita bowed out. Since Monsod had always been good copy for the press, newspaper representatives generally had friendly words for the departing gadfly. Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, an Aquino supporter but mildly sympathetic to Monsod, found her resignation inevitable, in view of the steadily-disappearing territory subject to her jurisdiction (*Inquirer*, 6/25/89):

A few weeks ago she was already fighting for her official life after Malacañang removed from her office the right to establish priorities of projects under the PAP, and entrusted it instead to the coordinating committee chaired by Roberto Villanueva. Earlier she was dealt a heavy blow when she was removed from the debt negotiating panel after she openly questioned the consequences of its policies with regard to the country's letter of intent to the IMF.

For a long while the feisty chain-smoking former UP Economics professor had been a solitary voice often speaking contrary to the policies of the seemingly monolithic finance and economic group that seems to enjoy Malacañang's ear.

Aquino and Enrile Joust Again

In late June, Senator Ponce Enrile accused President Aquino of instigating his inclusion in a California anti-racketeering suit against Marcos, claiming that it was retaliation for his expose of the "irregular" stock disposal plan of *Hacienda Luisita*, owned by the President's family. (A scheme originally proposed some years earlier by then-Senator Benigno Aquino.) "They want to silence me," Enrile raged, which led *Mr. and Ms.* to observe that Enrile was "outdistancing Laurel as leading Oppositionist. "It looks like he is truly the leader of the Opposition and not Doy Laurel . . . who if not more carefully, might find himself settling for the vice Presidency again."

Aquino Appoints Miriam Santiago as DAR Chief

One of President Aquino's few well-timed and shrewd political moves made headlines in July when she appointed the energetic and indomitable ex-Judge Miriam Santiago, who had cleansed the Augean stables at the Commission on Immigration, to head the now similarly-befouled DAR. Blas Ople (*Globe*, 7/3/89) applauded:

The President deserves our congratulations too. Having gotten used to the lackluster, even appalling mediocrity of some of her more recent appointments, we feel like cheering when the appointing power purposefully selects the best available talent. This, in a post that has lately acquired a singular and strategic importance of our development.

This is also a necessary tonic. It helps offset the impression of late that

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

cozy, intimate family-based relationships centered in Malacañang determine the allocation of opportunities for advancement in the present government.

Ople continued, in a more oracular vein, by addressing the President directly:

In the end, your performance will be judged on the single criterion of whether you have altered the feudal structure of our society through agrarian reform. There is no other test.

It has become the fashion to speak oracularly of land reform, and such pronouncements may or may not be true, but Ople made a persuasive case. It was no longer possible, he wrote,

to stop the world's advancing social morality. The crass social inequalities based on a master-servant relationship on the land were earlier thought to be God-ordained. The meek would collect their rewards in heaven. But no more.

Miriam, no shrinking violet, found it difficult not to insult those whom she believed to be her intellectual inferiors, and she would have a tumultuous experience in office, failing repeatedly to win the approval of the Commission on Appointments as DAR chief. Still, the appointment was not only popular, but had the additional advantage for the President of putting a woman with great political potential (she had been mentioned for President in 1992) in a position where she was bound to quarrel with the legislators and disappoint the many who thought of her as a *Wunderkind* who would tame the lions in the DAR as she had the hyenas at the Commission on Immigration—a feat that would indeed make her a serious contender for the Presidency.

Aquino Visits Germany, France and Belgium

The President loved to travel, finding it a morale-builder. She was always received graciously, usually with references to her “People Power” Revolution and sent home with gifts. Above all, she was for a time spared the abuse of her critics. In mid-July, she spent a week in Germany, France and Belgium, where she faced human rights hecklers as well as enthusiasts. When she returned, her supporters claimed she had achieved significant gains for the Philippines. Her critics complained that she was still throwing money away playing Queen.

“Big Bird”: the Marcos Loot in Switzerland

Another of the insoluble mysteries with which the Philippine political landscape is littered surfaced in July, when Senate President Salonga and Justice Secretary Ordoñez were accused of having bungled an opportunity to recover \$213 million of the Marcos loot in Switzerland. The accuser, banker Michael de Guzman, told his story to the House Committee on Public Accountability, claiming that after he had won the confidence of Marcos confederate Irwin Ver, he

was able to get deposed President Marcos' trust and confidence in Hawaii and succeeded in getting his authorization to withdraw all his Swiss accounts for re-deposit in de Guzman's Vienna Bank to avoid being frozen by the Swiss

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

government. He had let the Aquino government, through the PCGG, then headed by Salonga in on the deal and had made arrangements with Salonga, Ordoñez, and ret. Gen. Jose Almonte for delivery of the money to the Philippine government after withdrawal from the Swiss banks, but Salonga and Ordoñez scuttled the whole set-up at the last minute thus giving Marcos sufficient time to discover the whole scheme and to revoke his letter of authority.

Still, Teddy Boy Locsin had “exposed” de Guzman and General Almonte as crooks, liars and sub-humans, thus adding them to a large number of such inhabitants that populate Locsin’s Chamber of Horrors whom Locsin, if you believed him, has unmasked. The trouble with Teddy Boy’s indictments was that one is also obliged to believe that the good guys (himself, Ordoñez and Senator Salonga in this case) are always figures of impeccable virtue and their stories factual rather than fictional. The likelihood is that de Guzman’s story was substantially correct, and that Locsin’s suspicious of de Guzman’s and Almonte’s *bona fides* were equally accurate. In any case, the supposed deal was nipped in the bud. What is now indisputable is that not a dollar was recovered for the Philippine government. The deal was undone, and *either* de Guzman-Almonte were virtuously deprived of the \$213 million (or more likely, a fat commission) that they intended to divert, as Locsin argued, to their own pockets, *or* the Philippine government lost \$213 million, discounted by some unknown figure. Still, if the good guys can’t trust the crooks, the crooks don’t believe there *are* any good guys, but only rivals after the loot. The end result in the Philippines is always predictable: the politicians posture, the media scream, and the money disappears. The one thing of which this chronicler of Philippine political life is certain is that it is always better to cut a deal; this way the public treasury gets *something*.

This remarkable episode (graphically labeled “Operation Big Bird”) was explicated at length in *Mr. and Ms.* (8/1/89), by Noy Novela, who finds no crooks, but high-minded citizens involved in the caper. It deserves extensive citation as the best explanation of the problem of recovering Marcos plunder by people who are as suspicious of one another as of the original malefactor:

“Operation Big Bird” is no tale of fantasy. It was real and actual. It had the blessings of the Philippine government and those particularly concerned and interested in the recovery of the Marcos Swiss deposits. What went wrong during the “last minute” when the \$213 million (initial withdrawal) could have been in Mike de Guzman’s hands and deposited in his Vienna bank could not be essentially attributed to any one of the principal actors. At least—not to the dishonesty or lack of integrity of any of them. Salonga could have ordered the switching of the payment and bank depository—from Mike de Guzman and his bank to the Philippine government and a Swiss bank could not have been an error in judgment, motivated though for the interest of the Philippine government. Mike de Guzman was in on the deal—not out of a sense of patriotism but from a purely sound and legitimate business sense. Nothing illegal, corrupt or dishonest about that. He is a reputable businessman and like all other businessmen is free and entitled to do business with the government. After all, unlike the others, he and only he had his life at stake. He now is an enemy of the Marcoses. Joe Almonte, it can be safely said had only one

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

purpose and interest—recovering for the Filipino people what Marcos filched from them. Beyond that, it is highly doubtful whether he had any other . . . at least 15 dummy foundations and 12 Swiss banks of Marcos have been pinpointed . . . and the extent of Marcos deposits, about \$7.5 billion, ascertained.

President Aquino's Third State-of-the-Nation Address

On July 24, President Aquino delivered her third State-of-the-Nation address before Congress. It was a familiar bag of claims of progress, an admission of shortcomings, and pious appeals for public support. It was summarized by *Mr. and Ms.* (8/8/89):

They heard the President run through the significant positive changes in the political, economic and social standing and structured of her administration, particularly the gains in the economy. They also heard her admitting the stagnation, if not the deterioration, of life in the rural areas, the rise of criminality, the worsening of graft and corruption in government and on the whole, her exhortation to all her fellow government workers to do their share and utmost to achieve "a comprehensive advance on all fronts."

However, she warned (for the *nth* time) that she would no longer tolerate less than effective performance by her officials; she would no longer show "compassion":

. . . to those who do not produce results. She put "specifics" into an agenda for musts for Congress to urgently act upon and called on the prosecution arm of the government and the judiciary to better the administration of justice and the speedy disposition of cases.

These were old, familiar tunes, but few were any longer moved to sing along with the President. Senator Enrile snubbed the meeting; *Nacionalista* Executive Secretary Ople cracked: "I thought she was describing a fantasy land"; Senator Osmeña lamented that the President "had squandered a historic opportunity". Neither the President nor her critics profited from the occasion.

AFP Captures Satur Ocampo and His Wife

Some of the egg on the faces of the AFP splashed by the Rolando Kintanar escape was removed during the first week in August when Satur Ocampo and his common-law wife Carolina Malay, top National Democratic Front leaders, were picked up while driving in Makati. It was not known whether surveillance, heavily increased monetary rewards or luck had played the major role in the AFP's *coup*, but it was a major set-back for the NDF, especially when coupled with a failed NPA attempt on the life of Captain Garduce Cordera of the Pasay Intelligence group. Not only did Cordera survive, but three of the Sparrows were killed, two wounded and arrested, while three escaped.

Blas Ople Returns to Journalism

Manila's world of journalism since the establishment of the Aquino presi-

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

dency had been kaleidoscopic, new papers being formed with bewildering rapidity and very few going out of existence, though the general consensus is that only three or four are making a profit: the Manila *Bulletin* (a gold mine), the Philippine *Inquirer*, the Philippine *Star*, and possibly the Manila *Standard*. All have identifiable, wealthy publishers, who are prepared to pay heavily for the opportunity to influence favorably decisions which relate to their business interests, or less frequently, their political views or ambitions. Of the nearly two score daily newspapers, each had several columnists, most of whom use their space for gossip or to spread rumors damaging to the enemies of those whom they have been hired to defend. Until Blas Ople, ex-Labor Minister under Marcos but an Aquino-appointed delegate to the Constitutional Convention entered the lists, there were only two or three commentators whose opinions were worthy of attention: Francisco Tatad and Teddy Boy Locsin, both then of the *Globe*, Max Soliven of the *Star*. Leftists Francisco Nemenzo of the *Globe* and Armando Doronila of the *Chronicle*, and the Conservative Melchor Aquino in the *Bulletin*. When Tatad left the *Globe* in mid-year to become publisher of the new *Newsday*, his place was taken by Ople, who proceeded, four times a week, to write the most impressive columns yet recorded in Philippine journalism. Like Tatad a member of the Opposition, and like him, a former Leftist member of the Marcos government, but also a former journalist, Ople discussed weighty issues of political economy, domestic and foreign, with impressive competence. He also wrote a column a week for a business newspaper and one Tagalog publication.

Aquino Returns to Serious Trouble from Canadian and U.S. Visits

President Aquino's November trip to Canada and the United States, though benefiting from extensive local media coverage, was hardly a success in the Philippines. Rice farmers, whose planting had been limited by a severe shortage in government-provided credit, were also unhappy with negative responses to their cry for higher purchase prices for their rice, commuters complained of a desperate lack of public transportation, and most of the media objected to Mrs. Aquino's promotional stunt of launching the Philippine Fund from the floor of the New York Stock exchange as cheapening the office of the Presidency. They neglected to note, however, that her public invitation to Canadians to make fortunes in the Philippines overlooked the fact that Dewey Dee, who had run up a P600 million debt in the Philippines, was now a fugitive in Canada. Most interest in the trip of course attached to the informal meeting between President Bush and President Aquino on the subject of base negotiations; nearly all the journalists were sure that Bush had proposed, and Aquino had accepted, in principle, an extension of the American lease of its Philippine bases. Tatad (*Newsday*, 11/15/89) wrote that there was no doubt Bush wanted a "new, long-term security arrangement." The commentator had no objection, *provided* it was one which would command popular support. His argumentation was persuasive:

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Given Aquino's level of political and economic dependence on Washington and Bush's resolve to obtain "a new long-term agreement," there can be very little obstacle to a new agreement if the two political regimes want it badly enough. But unless it is an agreement which a majority of thoughtful and alert Filipinos would be willing to defend after its ink has run dry, it is likely to divide rather than unite the nation. And if it divides the nation, it cannot but wreck relations between the two countries.

With this commentary, Tatad had called attention to a neglected element in the discussion of the bases; it must be politically defensible, or it is worthless ^{view} which the author had expressed to high Embassy officials without perceptible effect.

Shortly after the President's return, one of her oldest supporters and most competent officials, Telecommunications Chief Jose Luis Alcuaz, was fired for complaining of pressure exerted on him by Presidential in-laws. (He was about to abolish the PLDT's monopoly on its foreign operations, and the PLDT is controlled by a Cojuangco.) Alcuaz, offering to describe to the Congress interference by Aquino family members in his work, predicted another military coup, a threat which no one in power took seriously.

Danding Cojuangco's Return Transforms Political Landscape

Everybody, but everybody, in the Philippine Government and its principal sponsor, the American government—was caught flat-footed by the return of Danding Cojuangco, exiled in the United States for four and half years. The shock was tectonic, and fully comparable in the Philippines to San Francisco's Richter Scale 7+ earthquake a few weeks earlier. As usual, days were spent with government officials blaming one another for letting him back into the country, though he had proper passports issued by the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles for himself and family, and there was obviously no legal impediment to his return for residence in his own country. It might have been said that Philippine authorities at home and abroad had been so concerned with blocking the return of a dead ex-President that a living body, concededly the most important Pretender to the Throne, had been lost sight of.

Danding had nothing to report on how he had arrived, but he called a press conference which the Palace learned of only after it had been informed by invited newsmen. Press Secretary Ascuña at first even denied that Cojuangco was actually in the country. Ex-President Marcos' strongest past associate had arrived, and the prospects of successful litigation against him or his properties were very dim. It was a major blow to the Aquino government.

RAM Strikes Again; Bush Saves Aquino

Mrs. Aquino had repeatedly scoffed at Lt. Col. Gringo Honasan's threats to mount another coup. On the night of November 30, she had to eat her words, and one day later she was still President of the Philippines only because Presi-

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

dent Bush, whom she had earlier scorned as a sycophant of President Marcos, had authorized U.S. fighter planes to neutralize Honasan's air force. There was humiliation also for the Senate's militantly anti-base Senators like Salonga, who shamefacedly approved the intervention. Nacionalists, pro- and anti-Cory alike, seethed in fury. When President Aquino asked its ally for intervention, the United States could at that point of course not refuse. The United States was thereby finally brought face-to-face with the implications of its 100% endorsement of Mrs. Aquino and her policies, which it has faithfully pursued since the "Revolution" of February 1986. The U.S. had not once accepted the necessity for utilizing its immense influence in favor of bringing about necessary changes in the policies and personnel of Mrs. Aquino's palpably incompetent and corrupt government, inaccurately defending its policy of all-out support by pointing out the lack of other popular leaders. However, to put the question, Aquino *or* who? was misleading; the proper question was Aquino *and* who? Deluding itself that it was avoiding charges of intervention (despite the swelling chorus of just such accusations by the opposition as American authorities cheered every initiative or omission of the Aquino government), the United States had ended up with the bankrupt policy of military intervention from the bases, the retention of which has determined its Philippine policy.

Blas Ople again had it right. Under the caption, "Why We Feel Diminished," he wrote (12/4/89):

The U.S. of course has always been perceived, since EDSA, as Cory Aquino's guarantor. But after this intervention, deservedly or not, President Aquino will be seen here and abroad as governing from a throne propped up by foreign bayonets. If her problems continue to multiply, as centrifugal forces keep tearing at the frayed bonds of national unity, this factor alone can raise grave questions about her legitimacy under her own Constitution.

Two days later, he wrote of the "shock of enlightenment" conveyed by the U.S. intervention:

The assumption of this role by the U.S. reduces the nation's sovereignty, which is the essence of the Constitution, to a doubtful status. It calls into question the role of the Philippine armed forces under that Constitution as the organization mandated "to protect the nation's sovereignty and integrity of the national territory." The AFP has become an auxiliary army. What that makes of its commander-in-chief, the President herself, is an obvious conclusion.

The Sources of Discontent

Americans may find it strange that the Aquino government, which they have been repeatedly assured by their official representatives was flourishing like the green bay tree and stood as a monument to restored democratic institutions, would, except for American intervention, have been overthrown on November 30 - December 1. The answer is simple. During its nearly four years in power, the Aquino administration had failed miserably. Conditions have deteriorated for all but the rich, who have shown energy chiefly in promoting their own interest

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

whatever the state of society as a whole. Since many of all but the *super*-Rich (Zobels, Cojuangcos, Sorianos, Elizaldes) occupy government positions and are growing richer as a result, there is little incentive to concern themselves with commuters without transportation, factories without power, unpunished crime, high prices for consumers, reduced prices for the farmer's products and a growing national burden of debt to be serviced by dwindling government services performed by a growing number of government employees. Most of the armed forces personnel, of course, are lower class, the very population sector worst hit by high prices, low incomes and inadequate public services.

There is also a conflict between younger and older officers in the AFP. The younger (RAM and YOU) are on the whole more aggressive and more honest, most of the older lazier and corrupt. Illegal *jueteng* (the numbers game) carries fat subsidies chiefly to older officers in the provinces, and in return the officers are not only expected to tolerate gambling but other illegal activities including prostitution and smuggling. *None* of the top leadership has the loyalty of most of those young officers, who sympathize with RAM and YOU when they are not actually members. Honasan has eluded arrest and circulated freely in and out of Manila because his sympathizers are everywhere. Only the upper chain of command and the personal loyalty of the Yellow Generals (those promoted by the Aquino regime personally loyal to Cory), along with shared hostility toward the NPA and the MNLF, hold the Armed Forces together. The Yellows have not been able to defeat the Communists, but their objective is to destroy the RAM and YOU with the assistance and blessings of the U.S. government. In the name of "Democracy", the U.S. government was supporting *mis*government and its policy of aggression against the poor.

Post Mortems on the November 30 Coup

The *putsch* narrowly failed to bring down Mrs. Aquino's government, but the attack may have saved her from a still more dangerous threat, against which she would have had greater difficulty in persuading the U.S. government to intervene. Scheduled to commence on December first were a series of demonstrations participated in by those with serious grievances against the failure of her government to perform effectively, including commuters without transportation, jeepney drivers forced to pay higher prices for fuel, householders suffering from brownouts and higher food prices, schoolteachers who had not received promised salary increases, farmers denied higher prices for their rice, and others who were suffering from *mis*government. The strikes were planned to begin in Manila and gradually spread throughout the country to become a general strike. Tempers were short, and no one spoke a good word for the government; the media were denouncing it for its failures and the general strike would have probably required extensive police intervention to quell. The coup snuffed out the demonstrations, but the grievances remained, and they would re-emerge despite new emergency powers requested by Mrs. Aquino and granted by the

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

Congress despite unanimous media criticism and demonstrations.

The reactions of the Aquino government ran true to form: bury grievances of soldiers and civilians alike under sanctimonious incantations of "democracy", taking care of its own, and turning a deaf ear to public grievances. It promoted loyal officers and provided bonuses for government officials who had remained at their posts. The House of Representatives, awash with funds, paid its employees, in addition to the thirteen-month Christmas bonus, a bonus of *two additional months!*

President Aquino then turned the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a holy ceremony, into a campaign rally for the government, denouncing her opposition like a fishwife, charging Enrile and vice President Laurel with treason, and contemptuously referring to the latter as a fly that she would brush off her sleeve. Busloads of spectators were trucked in from the provinces to swell the crowd, and Manila's parish priests did not open their churches for mass, so that the pious were obliged to attend the celebration at the junction of Epifanio de los Santos and Ortigas Avenue, where a huge religious figure personifying the Spirit of People Power that had allegedly brought Mrs. Aquino to power had been erected.

Ambassador Platt chimed in with a message to American businessman at the American Chamber of Commerce urging them to have faith in the business environment and the Aquino government, to which he pledged continued U.S. support. The speech was not well received. The businessmen were sophisticated observers of the political as well as business scene, and they wanted an explanation of how the situation had deteriorated to the point that American planes had been sent to preserve the Aquino government.

Once again, it was left to Blas Ople to offer Mrs. Aquino wise counsel. He urged her (*Globe*, 12/14/89) to seize the initiative, "standing up to the members of her own family, her coterie of friends and time-servers." Still, he wondered if she could stand the pain of getting rid of the misfits whom she had up to now clutched to her breast:

In the choice of advisers and associates, the President has been constrained by her own background as a housewife to depend on a relatively closed, narrow circle of people she has known just before, during and since the EDSA uprising. Even some of her senior appointments have been owned to individual members of her Palace staff who have succeeded in installing their own spouses in positions of power, not to mention other family members, classmates and friends.

He explained how this had come about as a result of her successful campaign for the presidency:

Cory's shock troops that took over government agencies in 1986 have of course recruited their own relatives and friends to staff the middle management of the bureaucracy. Between the so-called Council of Trent, which includes the religious, big business, and the NAMFREL, and the militants of the streets, we have the entire range of the army of recruits, 200,000 by one authoritative estimate, brought into government since 1986.

President Marcos, Ople wrote, had shown that the longer he stayed in power,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

the weaker he became even as he believed himself increasingly indispensable. This was happening to President Aquino after only three and half years. Ople called upon the President to make followers out of skeptics by turning over her *Hacienda Luisita* to land reform, despite the pain it could cause her relatives. She should lead by example. Ople praised the personal courage Mrs. Aquino had again shown during the coup, but now called upon her to show moral courage: "She's still proving her courage against enemies. What needs to be proven is her courage against kin and friends."

Reassembling the Left Under the People Power Banner

The aborted coup of November 30 also brought a rejuvenation of the human rights organizations, organized in yet another of their net-working agencies. This time it was KILOS (*Kilusan Laban sa Kudeta*) or Down with Military Coups, that met with Mrs. Aquino on December 13. One of the leaders reported the President as "open and reflective" on the occasion. KILOS spokesperson, Sylvia Mayuga of the *Globe* (Awake, People power!) on December 17 provided a handy list of the KILOS Steering committee: Gasty Ortigas, Sixto Roxas, Ed Garcia, Fr. Ben Nebres, Karina David, Karen Tañada, Ging Deles, Chito Gascon, Rey Teves, Binky Dalupan, Corazon Soliman, Paul Dominguez, Benjie Tolosa, Lina de Jesus, Ramon San Pascual. Together, according to Mayuga, they represented 600 people from 123 human rights organizations.

The KILOS agenda proposed Draconian punishment for the rebels, boycotting the companies and products of "millionaire Juan Ponce Enrile and billionaire Eduardo Cojuangco (watch for more names later!), the appointments of more, and more militant, non-elected sectoral representatives (women, the poor, the handicapped) to Congress, and Cabinet ministers to be ordered to consult regularly with their constituents through People Power representatives. As for the Marcos loyalists, Mayuga proudly asserted that KILOS proposed "side-stepping . . . the petty constitutional pace of steps like impeachment with direct people's action." The columnist was optimistic that Cory had at last learned her lesson:

Perchance she has already remembered who her real friends are and have always been. It is up to them to now make sure neither she nor the military, the shallow lawyers in power, the crooks around the Palace, the robots of the left, and the whiners in media ever forget it again. They do so at their own peril where the people know who needs whom more.

The Leftist political persuasion of the group was as usual not conceded; but it revealed its orientation in attributing Cory's troubles to having abandoned the Left:

Too well does everyone remember how things began to go wrong for Cory and her closest advisers in the Guesthouse as they succumbed to militarist pressure which, by calling their street parliamentarian-allies "leftist" effectively loosened the "Kapit-bisig" with which this government came to power in the first place.

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

. . . The President would at that point ignore the KILOS appeal, but would later turn to them, damning the politicians as *trapos* (a play on words: *trapo* is a cleaning rag, it is also an acronym of “traditional politicians”) by forming *Kabisig*, a “non-political” movement to serve her as a political party.

Cecilio Arillo, a RAM partisan and a friend of Enrile’s, who pointed out in *Newsday* (1/11/90) that staging the coup on Bonifacio Day had a symbolic significance that President Bush should understand:

In a country where there’s a long history of American antagonism, Mr. Bush should have thought (remembered) that a military intervention could create a splendid opportunity to revive hostilities for both the Left and the reformist forces, many of whom are friends of America.

This was well articulated by a young reformist officer who said: “Our intention to stage the attack on that date was not merely to topple a corrupt, incompetent and oppressive regime but also to perpetuate and internalize the wisdom and vision of one of our national heroes.”

Another Disappointing Cabinet Revamp

The “failed coup” failed to take over the government, but it forced Mrs. Aquino to dismiss some of her most discredited Cabinet Ministers. She did this with characteristic unwillingness. The *Globe*, whose publisher, Teodoro Locsin, Jr., doubles as Presidential speechwriter, fumed editorially on December 20:

There has been near total silence on the promised overhaul of the Cabinet that was on everyone’s lips the morning after the coup. From a President ready to do all to get her administration into shape for the challenges of the hour, Mrs. Aquino has turned into a stubborn defender and protector of her Cabinet and an avenging angel against anyone who dares suggest that anything is going remotely wrong with her administration.

The biggest gainer from this grotesque turn of events, of course, is none other than the incompetents in the Cabinet who now stand to be retained in office, regardless of how dismally they have performed in office and how ably they have misused it for their personal enrichment.

Moreover, the military rebels had their defenders. Nobody publicly endorsed RAM’s methods, but many thought the government had brought disaster on itself and judged their motives superior to those in power.

Blas Ople, who as nearly as anyone can be said to be the voice of the moderate Left, wrote (*Globe*, 12/13/89) of the government’s failures:

The issues of gross incompetence and corruption, both in the military and civilian administrations, the collapse of essential governmental services, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the grave impairment of the national sovereignty through the military intervention of a foreign power—all these can be glossed over and dismissed as mere partisan bellyaching. And yet these were issues squarely raised by the rebels, though dissemination had been restricted because of a policy to cut them off from the air and other media outlets.

Ople conceded, however, that despite the “dazzling precision and discipline with which the coup was executed,” the rebels lacked a credible agenda (12/18/89):

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

... the rebels were asking the people to trust them sight unseen, to take a leap of faith with them into the unknown where they wanted to take us all. This is too much to ask. Unless one is momentarily blinded by anger or frustration, no right-thinking citizen would agree to be a hostage to the vague and shadowy intentions of a group of armed men with no acceptable guarantors.

Finally, Mrs. Aquino yielded—grudgingly. She replaced nine department secretaries. Five of them were new faces. Replaced were Reinerio Reyes (transportation and communication), Miriam Defensor-Santiago (agrarian reform), Sedfrey Ordoñez (justice), Carlos Dominguez (agriculture), Franklin Drilon (labor), Vicente Jayme (finance), Lourdes Quisumbing (education), Jesus Estanislao (economic planning) and Adolfo Azcuña (press secretary). Four were retreads in different Cabinet posts: Drilon was appointed justice secretary, Estanislao was named finance secretary, Jayme stayed on as presidential economic and financial adviser, and Azcuña retained his position as presidential spokesman and legal counsel.

The new Cabinet members were Congressman Oscar Orbos (transportation and communication), Rep. Florencio Abad (agrarian reform), Honolulu Consul General Tomas “Buddy” Gomez (press secretary), Senen Bacani (agriculture) and Isidro Cariño (education). Also named to the Cabinet in acting capacity were Dionisio de la Serna (labor) and Cayetano Paderanga (economic planning). Replacements for “Jobo” Fernandez of the Central Bank and NICA chief Rodolfo Canieso were SSS Administrator Jose Cuisia and Major General Adalem (temporarily) and General Jose Magno as presidential military adviser.

The much-criticized Jose Concepcion, Jr. was retained as Minister of Trade and Commerce, while as soon as he could be retired as Manila Police Chief, Alfredo Lim, Jr. who had stood his ground against the rebels, was at once appointed NICA director. Nearly all of those dismissed were given, or promised, other government appointments. In the case of the embattled ex-Agrarian Reform Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago, who was rejected by the Committee on Appointments, she was promised a judicial appointment.

The appointees had generally distinguished themselves as pro-Cory zealots. Tomas “Buddy” Gomez, a former Ayala property expert, as Consul General in Honolulu, had kept a death watch on exiled President Marcos, General Lim, was said to be related to Teddy Locsin, Batanes Congressman Abad was a former street marcher with no qualifications as agrarian reformer except enthusiasm. Bacani, a technocrat, had formerly been employed by Dole Philippines. Cariño President of the University of the East, had faced down student resistance to increased fees.

President Aquino Appeals for Bounty Hunters

The AFP, honeycombed with RAM sympathizers, had so far been unable to recapture Col. Gringo Honasan and a few of his senior collaborators. Since Chief of Staff de Villa had charged that some of the RAM rebels had received money

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

from Marcos cronies to finance their *coup* attempt, President Aquino announced off-budget bounties for the capture of Honasan to be financed by her moneyed supporters, among whom Jaime Zobel was said to be preeminent. Speculation on the donors' identities was dampened by rumors that RAM had sent assassination threats to the President's deep-pocketed enthusiasts. Anonymous or not, the donors apparently anted up, and the purse for Gringo rose to a hefty P5 million, with lesser amounts for others.

The proposal to offer bounties for the capture of the principal rebels was widely condemned as a confession of failure. Tatad (*Newsday*, 1/4/90) lamented:

. . . it is a sad and painful commentary on the state of our values that in order to catch rebellious military officers whom the administration, the clergy and the media have depicted and denounced as criminals and cowards, the government has to put up so much money to reward those who would turn them into the authorities.

The government's recourse to bounty hunters also called forth a bitter column by the U.P.'s survey expert, Felipe Miranda (*Newsday*, 1/4/90). Referring to General Biazon, who was visibly torn by administration demands to crush rebels with a cause, he wrote:

The most serious challenge has come from the most staunchly constitutionalist of our warriors, from General Biazon himself. As an extraordinarily sensitive military man, General Biazon recently demanded that constitutionalist soldiers be given "institutions worth dying for."

. . . It is a terrible indictment of our system and our authorities in particular that, after four years, neither our restored institutions nor our revitalized authorities can summarily, credibly claim that they are indeed, as of now, even worth living for. Survey data point to the increasing public perception that government institutions and politicians in general have at best marginally touched the lives of citizens for the better.

The President also requested, and received, emergency powers. The Congress passed the legislation with a whoop, but the media reacted suspiciously, particularly since Mrs. Aquino believes that the critical Manila press is the chief source of stories of government weakness that appear in the American media. How sensitive to American press criticism Malacañang is was dramatically illustrated by a hysterical outburst on Locsin's part. In a front-paged editorial, Teddy Boy pledged death and damnation to the leading newspapers of the United States for daring to suggest that Cory's government might not survive. Teddy had been talking to Stanley Karnow, in for a visit, and he exploded:

We were shocked that the American media which we hold up as a model of journalism, especially the print media, should lend itself to manipulation by the US government. Given the vast financial resources of publications like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *L. A. Times*, their lending their prestigious of a government, even if it is their own, is utterly inexcusable. Not that poverty is ever a justification.

He then modestly annointed himself and his noble colleagues in the Philippine press:

conceding biases and bribe-taking of reporters and columnists on peripheral issues, the Philippine press is, by and large, impervious to institutional control

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

and the corruption of its editorial prerogatives. It has invariably come down on the right side in the major issues of the day, as witness its united stand against the military rebellion.

This was outrageous hypocrisy. *Every* Manila newspaper covers up for its sponsors, whether Malacañang or its owners, and every knowledgeable reader habitually discounts not only for bias and bribery, but also for partisanship beyond the bounds of reason.

The Governor Aguinaldo Fiasco

In a shoot-out sadly reminiscent of the slaughter at camp Cawa-Cawa in Jolo, twelve people, including the popular Civil Relations Chief Brigadier General Florendo, died in a gun battle between the government's civilian/military team and the governor's security men at the Hotel Delfino, Tuguegarao, a refuge to which the dismissed Governor had taken hostages including Florendo. Justice Department officials blamed the armed forces for delaying action until the Governor could lay plans for abducting the hostages. Whoever was to blame, it was yet another botched operation which cost lives. Ople (*Globe*, 1/20/90) had warned the military to "cool it", and had kind words for both Local Government Secretary Luis Santos ("tough and fearless") and Aguinaldo, who was a "populist leader who had won by a landslide". The columnist wrote:

The hotheads who are demanding that blood be spilt to prove a point, and who are hundreds of kilometers away from the scene of the crisis, ought to be the ones restrained. I hope we have not reached the point where Filipino lives no longer command a premium and the ends of justice must increasingly require a confrontation of arms between Filipinos, in Cagayan today, and tomorrow, elsewhere.

"Aquino's Rule is Imperiled"

... So a headline over a story by Luisita Lopez Torregrosa reported from the *New York Times*, which appeared in *Newsday* (2/14/90). Lopez had covered the Philippines for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1986 before transferring to the foreign desk of the *New York Times*. This gave her a platform which the Oppositionist *Newsday* could utilize as a bully pulpit. Manila was said to be "facing what is widely feared to be a military takeover" while "people power" was a fading memory. The President, Lopez reported, "appears truly unaware of the extent of the political crisis" or that "her popular base, especially in the educated urban areas, is diminishing." Teddy Benigno, Aquino's cashiered press secretary, had written in the pro-government *Philippine Star* that "there was strong doubt here and abroad that she can salvage the situation," despite Palace efforts to conceal the deterioration in the face of the Hongkong-based Political and Economic Rich Consultancy, which now rated the Philippines "second only to China as the worst nation in the area in which to invest." A Filipino military source had indentified the most pressing issues as "corruption, bureaucratic mismanagement, inability to deliver basic services, and control of skyrocketing

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

prices.” Despite General Ramos’ widely-perceived weaknesses, Torregrosa strangely reported him as “regarded as the most popular figure in the country.”

Correlative evidence of Mrs. Aquino’s declining popularity and personal weaknesses as President was provided by the University of the Philippines’ “Assessment Project on the State of the Union,” a colloquium staged a month earlier (January 12). Again Teddy Aquino’s was a principal voice, subjecting the President to little less than a psychobiography based on his 3-1/2 years of close association: she had led a very cloistered life, was an unfavorably-placed “middle child” in a large and close family that discussed things (only) among themselves, she had married an “earthquake” in Senator Aquino, who completely dominated her and she had barely survived a threatened break in their marriage while exiled in Boston. She was so intensely fatalistic that she believed that even the worst of problems “would fade away.” She had been persuaded to become a candidate by appeals that it was her obligation as Ninoy’s widow.

Dr. Gaston Ortigas of the Asian Institute of Management (and KILOS; see above) unknowingly betrayed a strange elitism when he spoke of the “sense of national outrage” when Ninoy was assassinated: “How could this be done to somebody of Aquino’s stature by a President of a country?” Passing over the disputed accusation that President Marcos was the assassin, this formulation let Ortigas recall that the assassination had led the Opposition to unite around Mrs. Aquino, despite her ignorance of politics, her distrust of politicians, and her original unwillingness to assume the burdens of the Presidency. The original coalition of human rights groups and out-of-power politicians had later broken up, and the gap between rich and poor had grown. The President did not like meeting face to face with groups, particularly protesters. She “had difficulty relating to people that she was not familiar with.” So she had distanced herself from the populists. She was also uncomfortable with argumentation and debate, so differences of opinion among bureaucrats distressed her. The upshot was that important decisions (on policy and personnel) were reached by personal lobbying.

Professor Felipe Miranda, in charge of the U. P. Social Weather Systems (public opinion surveys) pointed out that opinion on the government’s performance in thirteen basic areas from environment to corruption had shown “a marked deterioration across the board, especially in the last six months” (July 1989 to January 1990). In Miranda’s opinion, Cory Aquino was never presidential material: “our main consideration . . . (in February 1986) was not really so much having Cory as kicking out Marcos.” He agreed with Benigno that Mrs. Aquino had “not grown fast enough”. Still, Miranda was encouraged by what he perceived was a growth in her willingness to adopt a “take charge” attitude. (It would thus be just a month later that the former *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter would disagree with Miranda, and find Aquino’s rule “imperiled.”)

~~*Presidential Leadership and Cory Aquino*, edited by Belinda A. Aquino, University of the Philippines (1990)~~

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

President Aquino Celebrates Fourth Anniversary of Revolution

Mrs. Aquino celebrated the fourth anniversary of her ascension on February 25 by a rabble-rousing attack on Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, the one Oppositionist Senator in that body. The Oppositionist *Newsday* (2/26/90) called her speech "A Voice from the Gutter":

Exercising a rare gift that seems to set her apart from ordinary mortals, President Aquino yesterday decided to transform the nation's solemn remembrance of the 1986 EDSA revolt that toppled the Marcos dictatorship into a totally demeaning event, fit only for the vulgar and the uncouth. Where the nation expected to hear from the embattled leader an elevating message to nurture and nourish back its faith in her graft-ridden and unstable government, she obliged with an unusually pugnacious speech that would have shamed anyone born and reared above the gutter.

On the other hand, one of the President's tribunes (Noy Novela) in *Mr. and Ms.* (3/13/90) reported that the partisan crowd, thousands of whom had been trucked in, enjoyed the show heartily:

Joining the celebration was a crowd numbering at least 50,000 to a maximum of 300,000 (depends on a pro or anti Cory outlook) who after the mass was treated to a much cheered and well-received speech by President Aquino. The president spoke in a language a great majority of the congregation understood and simply loved and which the nose-tilted and high-brow factions of society consider the market vendors' lingo. But then the President was talking to the people who really mattered and who in the gravest and hottest of situations could be the only ones to come to her succor.

Reportedly emboldened and inflamed by a visit paid by a delegation of very rich matrons from areas inconvenienced and insulted by the attempted RAM coup, President Aquino instructed her officials to go after Senator Enrile hammer and tongs, charging him with "rebellion complexed with murder." Following orders, General Lim and his agents arrived at the Senate, and Enrile, to avoid a dangerous confrontation inside the hall, accompanied the General, who put him in an NBI cell. Enrile's lawyers appealed to the Supreme Court to grant bail and to throw the rebellion-complexed charge out of court, as an earlier court had long ago overturned the discredited doctrine resorted to during the height of Communist insurgency in 1950-1951. After six days, the Supreme Court (10-4-1), granted bail, and Enrile left to be met by crowds of cheering supporters, just as General Lim's employees at the NBI had earlier cheered him as he left that office for confinement in a Quezon City jail. There, his relatively comfortable quarters drew cries of outrage from Coryistas, who presumably felt their fellow millionaire should be put on a bread-and-water diet.

On the other hand, the maverick intellectual Adrian Cristobal (*Globe*, 3/18/90) poured scorn on the upper class Coryistas shouting for Enrile's blood, but were insistent on their own perquisites:

The question of guilt and innocence is immaterial for as long as the great women are convinced of the guilt. Isn't this also special treatment in the sense that their privileged position in society entitles them to a special hearing? They have their places of honor in banquets, an indication of their special

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

place in society. Anyone who tries to treat them like a common citizen—in fairs, restaurants, the street—would feel at once how it is to be a *common* citizen.

Roppongi: To Sell or Not to Sell?

Whenever the government buys or sells something for a large sum, suspicions of overpricing or underpricing and hidden commissions always surface. The proposed sale of its Roppongi property in Tokyo has been no exception, and since the amount involved is record-breaking, charges of wrongdoing have filled the air. Two major issues have emerged: whether the property, acquired as part of Japanese reparations, is to be considered a national patrimony, and thus not to be disposed of, and why the bidding has been kept secret. The sale was originally proposed in order to raise money for a destitute government in 1986, and is now defended as funds to be used for land reform, an objective thought to appeal to public opinion. (However, it is not lack of money which has immobilized land reform, but a combination of its value as a campaign issue, landlord resistance, and honest doubt that land reform is the answer to rural poverty.) Ambassador to Japan del Rosario argued that everything is above-board despite the absence of public bidding, but in the absence of information on bidders and prices, the suspicions remained, and the argument that leasing the property would yield greater revenues and honor the concept of national patrimony gained ground.

U. S. Defense Secretary Fails to Meet President

Defense Secretary Cheney's schedule for his March 1990 visit to the Philippines originally included a call on President Aquino. However, with criticisms peaking of shortages in U. S. deliveries of defense equipment and funds committed under the base agreement, the President announced that Cheney should spend his time with his counterpart, Defense Secretary Ramos. Cheney's schedule was therefore shortened by a day and the Manila press joyously or regretfully spoke of a Presidential "snub"—an interpretation impossible to deny, though capable of defense. However, such a defense was either juvenile or picayune, so it was simply denied—after all, Cheney was only a Cabinet member, and Mrs. Aquino was a President. (It was not a snub; just a slap!)

Cheney arrived, had a satisfactory meeting with Ramos, who suggested that the Philippines could indeed use arms surplus to the needs of Americans and its allies in Europe, and urged that Cheney seek to persuade the U.S. Congress to honor its full commitments. Planted stories in the United States suggested that the Defense Department was considering other options for Pacific bases and that the U.S. was "interested only in a long-term extension of base rights." It looked as if the U.S. was counting on those persuasion flights of U.S. Phantom jets to rescue Mrs. Aquino's government from her enemies as the *quid pro quo* for such

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

an extension. The U.S. seemed to be playing hardball, indeed.

Still, there was some tea and sympathy for Mrs. Aquino in the U.S. Senate. The Associated Press reported that Senator Andrew Semmel of the Foreign Relations Committee deplored criticism of President Aquino, and Jim Nach, Philippine desk officer at the State Department, offering no evidence, explained that she was "still very much in charge." Nach also badmouthed the RAM. Local readers were unaware that both Semmel and Nach were whistling in the dark. Larry Niksch of the Congressional Research Office, who both knew what he was talking about and was not obliged to speak no evil of the Aquino government, was less optimistic. Niksch believed

the coup had weakened support for Aquino among residents of Manila. He suggested the United States "depersonalize" its relationship with the Philippines and avoid statements that could be construed as supporting another term in office for Aquino.

"We need to talk more about the Philippine government—good or bad—and less about President Aquino," he said.

The United States should also "avoid too close an identification" with Defense Minister Fidel Ramos and step up contacts with loyal military and Marine officers, he said.

Niksch warned that attitudes in Congress toward the Philippines were changing because of Filipino complaints about the extent of US aid and because of doubts about Aquino's commitment to implement reforms.

Niksch was right, but was anyone listening in Washington?

Mrs. Aquino's Solomonic Land Reform Solution

President Aquino, beseeched by agrarian reformers on the one side and industrial developers on the other, decided that a 230 hectare property in Dasmariñas, Cavite, should be divided between a group of farmers (69 hectares) urged by DAR-designate Secretary Abad and the establishment of an industrial estate, as recommended by Trade Secretary Jose Concepcion, Jr. Mrs. Aquino was predictably assailed on both sides, without any indication that there were project studies for either proposal, or what land classification the property bore. On the dubious assumption that the Solomonic division took account of such considerations, her decision represented a reasonable compromise between two legitimate objectives. The decision even offered an opportunity (neglected) to move the debate on land reform from ideology and political partisanship to the realities of national development in both its economic and social aspects.

The Salvaging of "Don Pepe" Oyson

In mid-March came the news that smuggler/gambler/gangster Don Pepe Oyson had been shot while in the custody of police after "grabbing a gun" from one of the arresting officers. There was not a soul who doubted that Oyson had been deliberately murdered and only a handful at most who regretted his execution. Don Pepe was believed to be responsible, among numerous other casualties, for rubbing out the tabloid *Tempo's* Tim Olivares. A close friend of Tim's, Jarius

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

Bondoc, of the *Globe* (3/20/90) shed no crocodile tears:

There was cheering in the newsrooms of various dailies last Saturday when the news broke: Don Pepe had been shot dead while supposedly trying to escape from the police. "Good riddance," an editor at the *Globe* said.

This is not surprising. Many newsmen would actually pay to tear Don Pepe apart.

Heard were the usual pious regrets that Don Pepe had not been brought to the courts and there punished for his transgressions, but no one believed that he would not have bought himself free from police and judges. This widespread approval of salvaging registers a public judgment that the Philippine system of justice is a mockery wherever persons of influence are concerned. The elimination of corrupt police and government officials by the NPA, and police liquidation of gangsters are not only tolerated, but applauded. This was equally true before Marcos, during Marcos's tenure, and under Mrs. Aquino.

Land Reform and Street Marcher Abad

Congressional failure in March to confirm ex-Congressman Abad for the post of Secretary of Agrarian Reform was as usual simplistically attributed to the intransigence of landlords in Congress. Neither the influence of the Congressional landlords nor their opposition to Abad, who was accused of "favoring the farmers," was in doubt, but as usual, the brouhaha about landlords concealed more important reasons for the failure of President Aquino's land reform program (CARP). More important than Aquino's "failure of will" and her family's ownership of the lucrative *Hacienda Luisita*, were (1) the continuing determination of Filipino politicians to exploit the issue for votes rather than the welfare of tenants, (2) the use of the issue to demonstrate ideology rather than to build support for a concrete, sensible program devoted to tenant welfare, (3) the dishonesty of many of the government's employees, and (4) the absence of an effective farmer pressure group. To state the matter brutally, many land reform advocates don't really want a program that works, as it is much more serviceable politically to be able to accuse others of sabotage. The perception of land reform as an article of faith rather than an operational program, and the fact that many of the tenants themselves are not convinced that land reform is the road to their salvation also stand in the way of a successful program.

Under President Aquino, the first Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform was Heherson Alvarez, an Aquino lobbyist in the U.S. and a street marcher. Alvarez knew nothing of tenants and little of agriculture, exploiting his tenure as Secretary to run, successfully, as an Aquino candidate for Senator. Alvarez showed little disposition to learn anything about agrarian reform except that its advocacy promised votes. He was followed by the wealthy Phillip Juico, who at least knew something of irrigation if nothing of tenants, and owed his appointment to his wife's cozy relations with Mrs. Aquino. When Juico was unseated by the Garchitorena land purchase scandal, he was replaced by Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a lawyer and judge who had fearlessly cleaned up the corrupt

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Bureau of Immigration and who began cleaning up DAR, only to fall victimless to the landlords then to her own propensity for insulting members of Congress, who subsequently refused to confirm her appointment. Abad was another street marcher who came from Batanes, which has no tenant population, and who certainly affirmed that he was “for the farmers,” but nonetheless failed to gain their militant support. One of the greatest ironies was that there had been established, as a requirement for the position of Agrarian Reform Secretary, a minimum five years experience with agrarian reform. *Not a single appointee* under Aquino could show such a qualification. A still greater irony was that the only persons who could qualify were those who had served in the accursed Marcos’ cabinet—Estrella, Medina, etc. at the DAR, or Jeremiah Montemayor (law dean and peasant leader) who had also supported Marcos (as had Huk *Supremo* Luis Taruc). However, since the office was seen as a vote-getter, all who served in the Marcos administration (whether as civil servants or political appointees) were eliminated from consideration.

Another successfully concealed problem was that even lower-level government officials had shown that they could not be trusted to be honest. Garchitorena was big enough to require the attention of senior officials, whose status made the case notorious. An equally serious problem for the program was that very few of the lesser officials—those who handled government credit or fertilizer supplies, for example, did their jobs without minor (or major) defalcations.

The problem with mobilizing farmer organization support for land reform was that except for the Communists, very few farmers were truly militant. Most of them were ready to settle with the landowner on terms that promised a tolerable living, and when land reform legislation separated them from their landlord, who had previously provided seeds, fertilizer and credit—as well as small cash advances for urgent family needs,—the institutions established to replace them were always inadequate and often corrupt.

President Aquino was also embarrassed by the problem of the Cojuangco’s *Hacienda Luisita*, one of the few landholdings that were large enough to be regarded as *latifundia*. Ninoy Aquino had much earlier recommended converting the very profitable and scientifically-operated family-owned company into a corporation and distributing shares to farmers working the estate. This was called an evasion, and so it was—but it had some genuine farmer support. To accept its transformation into a corporation, efficiently and equitably operated, however, would encourage evasion by other landowners, and the scheme was of course denounced as crippling the program. It did indeed burden the program, but did *not* cripple it, and the case of Dasmariñas in 1990 showed that sentiment toward such solutions was divided.

YOU Slams Marxist Nemenzo

That RAM has since the December coup of 1989 been emasculated is one of

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

Defense Secretary Ramos' and President Aquino's boasts, and it is certain that some of its leaders have been captured. The ferment among the young officers of the AFP, however, continued. Another military organization, YOU (Young Officers Union) has emerged, and has called attention to itself in letters sent to the media. One of the most interesting was one which appeared in the *Globe* on April 9, 1990, addressed to Francisco Nemenzo, the U.P.'s Marxist vice President, who is the self-appointed authority on what Socialism, Marxism, and Leninism are and are not.

Irony is not YOU's *forte*, but its letter includes several ironical passages, such as "We will certainly enlist your very competent services when socialism can already be included in the agenda after national liberation has been achieved." YOU's letter also defended the nationalism of the military: "We hope that you will finally find it in your heart to admit what used to be unthinkable: a nationalist military." YOU professed great confidence in its future effectiveness as well as its vision: "We believe firmly that we can seize power and we don't have to catch the government forces napping. The vast majority of them, including enlisted personnel, shall ultimately and quickly join us in this crusade."

Strong-Arming the Opposition with the "Yellow Army"

Frustrated at being unable to punish the leaders of the Makati *coup*, the Aquino administration has been harrasing those suspected of being in sympathy with the rebels. Thus, in addition to cases filed against ex-Governor and close Marcos associate "Danding" Cojuangco, Iñigo Zobel, the son of Enrique (*not* brother Jaime Zobel, who is a strong Aquino supporter) complained to Defense Secretary Ramos of acts committed against him and his family in Batangas "by armed raiding parties that looked and acted like military men."

In his letter to Ramos, the young Zobel also protested being "trailed" on April 6 by a T-28 (Tora Tora) from its hangar at "Nichols field (Villamor Air Base) to the Zobel airstrip at Calatagan, Batangas". Certainly the Aquino government, whether using "Yellow Army" elements (units personally loyal to the President) or not, is entitled to monitor the acts of oppositionists whom it suspects of illegally supporting the rebels, but this particular type of "harrassment", is startlingly reminiscent of Marcos' intimidation of opponents during Martial Law days.

Preparing for the Base Negotiations

The frustrations of the Filipino nationalists as the base negotiations approached was almost pitiful. Tried-and-true Filipino tactics or simply refusing to negotiate in the absence of concessions has finally failed—not because of the recalcitrance of the American negotiators, who cannot decide whether their chief objective is a new base agreement or the continuation in office of Mrs. Aquino, and hence see the latter as essential to the former—but because the

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

bottom of the barrel in Americans funding has been reached. It is a curious fact that enrages the Filipinos that the *inability* rather than the unwillingness, of the Americans to pay even the promised compensation actually *strengthens* the American hand. The Philippine negotiators are beginning to realize that this time they will either have to be content with what the United States offers, or denounce the agreement—and this the negotiators cannot afford, though those who have no responsibilities for affairs of state would jubilantly invite the Americans to leave. For its part, the U.S. Congress seems finally to have realized that America's own internal debt problem limits its funding resources as critically as Filipino external debts limit *its* options.

Teddy Locsin, publisher of the *Globe*, is a monstrous ego who though still furious at being excluded from the inner corridors of power at the Palace, clings desperately to Mrs. Aquino's skirts, absolving her of all error and guilt in terms of commanded responsibility, justifying her numerous failures by blaming her associates. He is also torn between his compulsion to explain how knowledgeable of, and influential with the Americans he is, and his determination to humble them in some personal encounter. On April 12, he exulted that U.S. Ambassador Platt had been flummoxed by the Filipinos' tactic of reneging on agreed positions, and would be replaced as the head of the American panel by Richard Armitage. He wrote that this meant Platt would

take a back seat in the negotiations, although he won't be out of the room. . . . Last year's bases review simply wiped him out. He couldn't take the unique Filipino strategy of coming to the negotiating table every day with *tabula rasa*—. . .

While we would like to think that this was a deliberately chosen tactic, we are afraid that natural causes are the more likely explanation. Filipinos just don't like to do their homework. Just the same, by a strange fluke, the tactic worked. The American panel was worn down to near nervous exhaustion. . .

We may point out that the Filipinos had similarly handled (that is, mis-managed) their negotiations with Malaysia in 1969(?) until Ambassador Guerrero, sent post-haste from London, salvaged the Philippine position on Sabah (North Borneo).

Locsin continued:

Mr. Armitage is a highly respected man in Washington and in the Pentagon. A month ago, . . . he declared at the War College that his first priority, if he had anything to do with the bases talks, is to keep the Philippines as a democratic state in the Western alliance. . . . The greatest loss, he thinks, would be to win the bases and lose the Philippines to bitterness and hatred towards the United States.

. . . This insightful comment puts Aquinista Locsin, Christian Socialist Tatad and moderate Leftist Ople—the best brains in the Philippine media—in the same corner on the subject of the bases negotiations. He concluded:

Mr. Armitage knows what national hatreds can deteriorate into. He is no armchair soldier, but knows first-hand the requirements of war, the price of conflict, and the inestimable value of peace. . . . He prefers to project himself as a latter-day Patton. His gruff voice and barrel chest will take some getting used to. Mr. Armitage is a straight talker.

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

In choosing this man, President Bush clearly wants to achieve more than just a grudging maintenance of the status quo. Perhaps a revived friendship and real cooperation to match the fading rhetoric of Philippine-American special relations.

The Armitage Visit

Locsin had seldom welcomed an American visitor with such enthusiasm, perhaps because it offered him the opportunity a few days later to boast of his occupying the same platform as Armitage at a session of the National War College in Washington (which Locsin mistakenly identified as the "Army War College"). There, Locsin reported, he (Locsin) had stunned the students with his wit and wisdom.

For his part, Armitage came and saw but did not conquer, despite a superbly-crafted opening speech which emphasized that the U.S. was willing to leave the bases if requested, but expressed the hope that a new and more mature relationship could be established in the light of a changed world. He emphasized the threadbare but still official American line that Mrs. Aquino's government had "restored democracy" and the "rule of law". He dismissed the fear of the Filipinos that they would never be truly free as long as the bases remained:

... it troubles me when I hear some Filipinos assert that American use of Philippine military bases can only be a vestige of the colonial relationship; that the Philippines can never be truly free, truly independent and truly democratic until the Americans are gone, once and for all.

Armitage suggested that this misapprehension existed because

some Filipinos underestimate the monumental significance of democracy's redemption in 1986. It troubles me because it understates, for reasons I cannot fathom, the contribution the Philippines has made and still makes to peace and stability in Asia.

Mr. Armitage was grossly overstating his case. The significance of "democracy's redemption in 1986" was not "monumental": Mrs. Aquino had restored nothing but the pre-Martial Law system of corrupt, crony politics, and her government, in contrast to her predecessor, totally ignored the plight of the poor. The contribution that a faltering, destabilized Philippines could make to the "peace and stability in Asia" alleged by Armitage was transparent shorthand only for the presence of the U.S. bases in the Philippines. Such an interpretation was not only rejected by Foreign Minister Manglapus, who believes that the U.S. bases serves only to defend American interests, but by those more appreciative of their other effects.

The basic failing of Mr. Armitage's position was that he was describing a Philippines that existed only in the minds of Americans officially obliged to see no evil, hear no evil and above all, to speak no evil of Mrs. Aquino's government—a government that survived only because of American support—political, economic, and military, the removal of any element of which would lead to its collapse.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

In the end, Armitage was sufficiently irritated by the Filipinos' complaints that they had not received what they had been promised that he denounced their "cash register diplomacy"—a formulation that justified Locsin's description of Armitage as a "straight talker", but which hardly promoted progress in the talks. Subsequent demands by Filipino showboating politicians that Armitage be declared *persona non grata* not only demonstrated their tender sensibilities and ignorance of diplomatic protocol, but Mr. Armitage's own inaccurate briefing on the Philippines. He had been promised a shining example of statecraft headed by a Joan of Arc, and instead found himself talking to the representatives of a corroded and crumbling myth.

Moreover, there was an element of deception in Mr. Armitage's approach. The U.S. *had* welched on a commitment, and it would have perhaps been better (and more in keeping with his image) if he had simply admitted that the U.S. had defaulted, but would do the best the U.S.' own financial troubles would permit to make up the deficit. Finally, although Mr. Armitage cannot be defaulted for not knowing it, there is truth in the Filipino argument that the Philippines will never (at least psychologically), be free to act as an independent nation as long as only the presence of the U.S. bases permits them the degree of international independence they presently exercise.

Locsin (5/19/90) found that Mrs. Aquino's opening statement (which his assertive tone suggests he wrote) did not so much "set a friendly tone" as "lay down the law" on conditions: no nuclear weapons, a treaty rather than an executive agreement, to be later subject to a plebiscite, with agreement or disagreement to be reached in 1991. According to Locsin's "scoreboard", the result of the exchange was: Mrs. Aquino 4, Bush, 1. By Locsin's calculations, the only point lost by Mrs. Aquino was that she implored the Lord's help, when after all, the matter was not God's, but Mrs. Aquino's, responsibility.

Joker Reports a New Scandal

Joker Arroyo, originally a presidential *confidante* and executive secretary, was removed from the Cabinet because he was abrasive and papers piled up on his desk, but he retained lucrative positions as Chairman of the Philippine National Bank and Governor of the ADB. When he attacked Trade Secretary Concepcion and Coordinating Secretary for Economic Affairs Vicente Jayme for massive "behest loans" (granted not on their merit, but because of requests from high authority), to the Taiwan-based owners of the proposed Luzon Petrochemical Project, he was fired, despite an undeniably excellent job of rehabilitating the PNB. Joker pretty much made his case that there had been pressure from Jayme and Concepcion to grant immense government credit against a very small equity contributed by the owners, but his accusations soon became chiefly remarkable for their significance as a test of strength between two cabinet factions for influence over the President. Given their respective positions, it seemed a one-sided battle, since Joker was *out*, and Jayme/Concepcion were very much *in*.

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

Locsin, Joker's old friend, wrote (*Globe*, 5/26/90):

There were attempts to bring the decisions of the petrochemical project out in the open for over a year now. The *Globe* itself had commented on it. But for every issue openly raised against the project by its opponents, the question of loyalty to the President was secretly raised against the opponents of lobbyists in the Guesthouse, without explaining what the Presidency had to do with it.

The issues of the project's viability and financial integrity are now seen, not in an objective light, but as a test of the influence of two factions over the President.

The defenders of the project first reacted with *ad hominem* arguments against Joker, identifying him as the lawyer of Wellex Plastics Industries, which imports nearly all of the raw materials used by the thriving plastic business. Its monopoly would be destroyed by a local petrochemical industry, but the battle soon broadened to an attack on Concepcion and Jayme, both of whom seemed vulnerable. Concepcion had not really divested himself of shares in his companies whose spectacular success during his tenure as Commerce Secretary were impossible to explain only by the "good management" claimed by his twin brother Raul, while it turned out that a major figure in the local partner of Luzon Petrochemical was Jayme's eldest son. Concepcion's efforts to defend himself included several failures to submit documentation, erasures on relevant papers, a fire said to have destroyed certain proofs, and successively retracted excuses. The public was positive that there had been a clear case of conflict of interest, but Concepcion knew (as did all the insiders) that the President actually owed Concepcion her proclamation as President. As the head of the allegedly "non-partisan" NAMFREL, he had declared her victory in the "snap" election in 1986 with less than 75% of the votes counted. Mrs. Aquino was backing him to the hilt in June and July, but the suspicion and resentment felt toward Concepcion would not be stifled.

Another DCM Departs, Vowing Love and Loyalty to Cory

"Wonderful people, political freedom and a resurgent economy." So characterized (to Rotary) the departing U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Kenneth Quinn the country he was leaving on May 4. In contrast to his predecessor Philip Kaplan, Quinn was warmly regarded by his associates, but his perspicacity was doubted by several visitors to the Embassy during his watch. Nonetheless, Quinn's performance was highly regarded by Washington, which promoted him to an assistance Secretaryship in the State Department. The appointment had to be based on the enthusiasm with which Quinn, like Kaplan, had expressed support for and faith in Mrs. Aquino's government. In his *l'envoi*, Quinn demonstrated that he shared Kaplan's affection for the Philippines, "a special place", and the Filipinos, "a special people". He explained that what the Americans needed to do was to "keep things in perspective." He would take with him, he said, warm memories of the freedom that the

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Filipinos enjoyed free speech and a free press. When he had visited the Philippines eighteen years earlier (1972), a priest riding on the same bus to Baguio had boasted that the Filipinos were “even free~~er~~ than the Americans.” This proved to be Quinn’s vision on the road to Damascus—that “freedom is an essential part of the Filipino character.” (Not only Marcos from 1972 to 1983, but Quezon from 1926 to 1942 and a host of pre-and postwar provincial *caciques*, would disagree). On economic issues, Quinn’s view as that the country was “straining at the bit to gallop faster.” (The Risk Consultancy of Hong Kong would undoubtedly like to share in the data acquired by the departing DCM, since its findings were so contrary.) The speaker then effectively resorted to the debater’s device of using (1) a pessimistic but misleading T.V. account of San Francisco as a disaster area after its recent earthquake with Manila, which was, he claimed, recovering just as San Francisco, and (2) describing difficulties surmounted by President George Washington during his term of office (!) as hopeful analogies with those faced by President Aquino.

Quinn did not, like Kaplan, sob, but his speech should have been set at music.

Danding Cojuangco’s Birthday Party

Expecting several thousands, Eduardo (Danding) Cojuangco celebrated his birthday, June 10, in Sison, Pangasinan, the site of his Northern Cement Company. The site is north of the province of Tarlac, whose allegiance he disputes with Mrs. Aquino and her brother Peping. Heavily laden outdoor tables were prepared under awnings. Preparations, however, were inadequate; the Big Spender actually ran out of food early, as *tens* of thousands from Mindanao to Aparri showed up. It was a triumphal occasion, even though Danding disappointed many who had expected that he would declare himself a candidate for the presidency in 1992. Still, in a very impressive speech reprinted in full by *Newsday*, he charged the government with being “cruel and insensitive.” He regretted not having seen his friends for four years, but he was “still the same Danding, . . . a little older, and hopefully a little wiser.” He urged his listeners and the country as a whole to allow the Almighty to judge the deceased President Marcos, but he emphasized that he had been loyal to the bitter end. Danding called for new ideas and new hopes, and then listed what he saw as the country’s principal weaknesses: a lack of security everywhere, a depressed economy with no relief in sight, warring political factions, and above all, “there was no one in charge.” In Tagalog, he pledged to remain in the Philippines, having spurned the advice of his friends in the United States, who recited the miseries at home. Danding assured his listeners that he did not regret for a single minute returning: “This is my country, my country, right or wrong; this is my home, this is where I belong.”

Danding then turned to prescriptions for economic recovery. He predicted that the country would persevere under selfless leaders, who would put the interests of the nation ahead of their own. Properly managed, Mindanao alone

A DISCREDITED GOVERNMENT

could feed the Philippines; in a few years, adequate power resources (petroleum, gas and geothermal) could be developed nationally. Poverty was the great problem; production was the key to relieving poverty. Danding breathed confidence, and his whole stance seemed calculated to contrast with a weak and fumbling President. In closing, Cojuangco thanked his friends from all over the Philippines: "my *barcada* from Negros," "blood brothers from Pangasinan and Ilocandia," "my allies and colleagues from Central Luzon, Metro Manila, Bicol, and my political family from Tarlac and Pampanga."

Mrs. Aquino's Offensive Against the Trapos

Trapo means rag. It is also an acronym for "traditional politicians." Ever since the Congress started resisting Mrs. Aquino's policies and prerogatives, and particularly by its criticism of her Cabinet associates and advisers, Mrs. Aquino has assailed the professional politicians. She could count on widespread distrust and even despair with the politicians in support of her campaign, but her own associates were no more popular. Mrs. Aquino has never understood the vital role of political parties in a democratic government, as O. D. Corpuz, the brilliant political scientist, historian and former Minister of Education, pointed out in *Newsday* (6/19/90). Corpuz skewered two easily identified hypocrites (Aquino, Concepcion):

[The politicians] . . . laugh at demagogues who claim to favor social justice through agrarian reform, but resort to shady means to retain their haciendas. Each day they hear and see officials who declare themselves against graft and corruption but will not divest their holdings when they assume public office: or declare themselves absolutely, utterly, behind human rights, but will keep children and grandchildren of their political enemies from coming home to their country, on the tortuous argument that the children and infants are "threats to the national security."

The politicians were not lovable people, but they had an essential role to perform. They were brokers:

Not bothered by specious principles, the politician blithely plods ahead, working not for the ideal, but for the possible. He forges the compromise among the protagonists in politics so that the values and interests they represent can coexist in peace. For as long as he does this role the politician is a vital agent of the country's unity in diversity. Efforts by "non-politicians" to solve problems through gimmick "popular movements," side-stepping the system of checks and balance in politics based on the deeply embedded variations of our political convictions, reflect a basic ignorance by the amateur of the purpose of democratic politics.

Nearly a month later, Melchor Aquino (*Bulletin*, 7/15/90) would agree with Corpuz on the essential role of the politicians:

The Republic is committed to representative government and constitutional democracy. The responsibility for the administration of public affairs and the making and conduct of national policy is reposed in the duly elected representatives of the people. . .

Claims to popular favor fall of their own weight when the claimants

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

don't even have the manhood, the guts, and the daring to come out of the shadows and fight in broad daylight. . .

The last paragraph was of course a denunciation of Mrs. Aquino's transparent resort, in the face of her fading popular support, to plebiscitary appeals to the street marchers that are the core of *Kabisig*. *Mr. and Ms.* tried again to deny the principle of command responsibility and blame her advisers, but an Ateneo public opinion poll in Manila showed that Filipinos gave her a 24 per cent margin of satisfaction for office performance as against her 32 per cent rating of August, 1989; 44 per cent in February, 1989; 57 per cent in August, 1988, and 64 per cent in February, 1988. *Mr. and Ms.* conceded only that "President Aquino has failed to deliver what the greater populace need and want—economic security."

Nonetheless, the magazine reaffirmed the thesis that her advisers, not the President, should be blamed:

The Filipino people should not blame her for this. They installed her as their President for the sole purpose of replacing Ferdinand Marcos. None other was strong enough—popular enough to topple Marcos. Without her, most surely today, Marcos would still be alive, ruling this nation. The people knew that the simple housewife would govern not through her own expertise and know-how (like Marcos) but through the direction, advise and management of close advisers. The people should have realized that the quality of her performance could only be measured by the quality of her advisers.

Chapter XIII

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

In the face of her government's decline in credibility and to arrest the slide in her personal popularity, President Aquino tried to revive her populist coalition and to deflect disillusionment and discontent to the Congress. This was a dubious tactic at best, since her Cabinet was at least as unpopular as the Congressmen, and it turned out to be badly timed, as in July all attention was suddenly turned to the New York trial of Imelda Marcos. When Imelda was acquitted, additional elements of instability were introduced into Manila's political climate. This was followed, before the month ended, by a second blow from a still more formidable woman—Mother Nature, who produced a major earthquake, which devastated parts of Northern Luzon, especially Baguio. Then a political storm which seemed briefly to threaten to engulf her presidency blew up over two deaths in a drug bust.

When the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty in the case of Mrs. Marcos, it saved the U.S. government's tarnished honor (it had promised the fleeing Filipino head of state an honorable exile in the U.S.), but it shattered Mrs. Aquino's government's pipe dream of solving its financial problems by recovering the alleged billions stolen by Mr. and Mrs. Marcos, and in the process again called attention to the government's failure to account for the jewels seized by Mrs. Aquino's representatives sent to the Palace after the flight of the Presidential couple. Mrs. Aquino's Leftist critic in New York, Nicochka(!) Rosca pointed out in the *Sunday Times Magazine* of July 1: "The Philippine government has been forced to reveal the lists [of property confiscated] . . . we now know what was in there—and when a better administration comes around we'll have a basis to demand some accounting." Then, at almost the same moment the news of the verdict reached Manila, Ambassador Platt announced that the American Peace Corps was being evacuated from the Philippines because of NPA threats against its personnel.

Locsin, in a *Globe* editorial (7/4/90), commented first on empty Filipino threats to prosecute Mrs. Marcos in the Philippines:

The world . . . will not believe that a government that has violated the root principle of justice—no law, no crime—can do proper justice to anyone.

With this acquittal, unqualified and on all counts, we can kiss our Swiss claims goodbye.

The *Globe's* publisher summed up the disasters of the week:

It has been a bad week for the Philippines. We have quarreled with an old ally because it would not hazard its youth to prop up our tottering image abroad. And now we have insulted the efforts of the handful of men and women who, by actions and not by silly statements, have shown that they cared deeply about giving justice to the Filipino people. And they are not even Filipinos!

Let us not add ingratitude and gracelessness to the litany of our recent mistakes.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

The President's faithful but ungrammatical supporter, Noy Novela in *Mr. and Ms.*, offered scant comfort. Imelda might try to buy the Presidency in 1992, but

The best President Cory can do now is to foget Imelda and what she might do to topple her. She better work triple time to feed the hungry, build more and more roads and schoolhouses, obliterate the power brownouts, get the CARP moving faster—in short, get her entire government machinery to stop loafing, blabbing and planning—always planning—and instead deliver all the basic services the populace needs. . . This could be her formidable (sic) bastion which can withstand . . . all the destabilizing assaults. . . Imelda can do with all her money.

Again it took Ople to lay out the deeper significance of the verdict, and once again to point out that the roots of Philippine instability lay in its governments' insistence on the politics of revenge. In his first column for the *Bulletin* (7/5/90), he wrote:

The prestige of a decision by the American courts and their constitutional trial by jury which the government had coveted for its own trophy and to solve its own dilemma has instead wrapped itself, like a shining mantle, around the widow of Ferdinand Marcos. . .

We will remain for some time yet a hostage to the vicissitudes of Marcos-Aquino politics, a framework of confrontation between two families and their respective factions replete with the spirit of revenge. . .

A week later (7/12/90), Ople appealed to President Aquino not to take counsel of her fears, but to "give our courts a chance";

I believe President Aquino need not feel insecure about the strength and firmness of the foundations already laid down for our constitutional democracy. She should not listen to the counsels of fear, as Marcos did on the issue of the return of her husband, Ninoy Aquino. She should allow Imelda Marcos to come home and face trial, not the least because the Philippine justice system deserves to be tested in the crucible of our own history.

But if Mrs. Aquino should prove sensitive to what Ople called the "reverberations in the future of a fair trial at home," would Mrs. Marcos risk it? Ople pointed out that the exile might judge it worth the risk:

For Mrs. Marcos, her vindication in America is precious but not as definitive as a judgment at home. But can she expect a fair trial in an Aquino court? Some will say this is debatable. Rigging a trial in full view of the nation and of the world will, on the other hand, bring its own retribution.

Ople was talking statesmanship, but nobody was listening. The Palace might however listen to Locsin, who was no statesman, but the President's legal assassin, trained at Harvard by the great Liberal *guru* Laurence Tribe himself. He wrote (*Globe*, 7/11/90):

We need her here not to prosecute her. We have seen that show already and with better players. We need her here to point out the specific properties of the vast Marcos wealth she and her husband left behind: the banks, the public utilities, the arrastre company, the shipping company, the newspaper, the houses, the jewelry, the shares of stock in oil companies and in mines, and many, many more. We need her to finger not just the Marcos cronies who betrayed her, but the EDSA "heroes" who betrayed us—the cause-oriented thieves who lecture us on morality while robbing the country again of that which the country was robbed earlier.

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

As long as Locsin is not required to admit any command responsibility on Mrs. Aquino's part, he is a legal beagle, and he is correct in insisting that there is plenty of Marcos stolen wealth still in the Philippine, successfully hijacked by Cory's cronies, associates and relatives.

F. E. E. R. Reports a Flourishing Economy

On July 12, 1990 the *Far Eastern Economics Review* of Hong Kong, British-edited, weighed in with a remarkably optimistic assessment of the Philippine economy. Though it concurred in the general estimate that political weakness threatened to overwhelm Mrs. Aquino's government, the *FEER* claimed that there had been import economic progress. It wrote:

What seems puzzling to outsiders is the following: power and communications are unreliable; there is a continuing threat of another coup attempt; there is an inefficient bureaucracy and a presidency lacking power; and there is a circus of a congress. Yet President Corazon Aquino's statement in one of her speeches abroad seems to be true: "Manila is a place to make a fortune."

The magazine pointed out that profit margins were high and the Chinese, particularly, were investing heavily in expensive urban real estate. The shrewd investment banker Tony Gatmaitan had reminded potential investors: "This is the easiest place to do business, if you know how, even easier than in Hong Kong," and the Jaka Investment Company, owned by the leading Oppositionist, Senator Ponce Enrile, had "in the past ten years . . . quietly gobbled up real estate in Makati, bought out two manufacturing firms, and increased its stake in the second biggest industrial project in the country controlled by Ronnie Velasco, his former associate in the Marcos government." The *FEER* emphasized the contribution to the economy being made by the overseas workers, whose earnings were probably double what they remitted legally to the Philippines. It also called attention to a truly astonishing piece of economic data: manufactured products now accounted for 61.3%(!) of total exports compared with only 22.1% ten years earlier (1976). Another political legacy of the Marcos regime which had paid off handsomely in Chinese investment capital was his government's liberalization of the citizenship laws in 1975, "which could not have been undertaken with a Congress pandering to nationalist emotionalist sentiments."

The *FEER* had harsh words for the Philippine Congress, a source of "words not acts", but it did not spare the President, writing "In the four years that she had been in power, Aquino has never presented a coherent legislative program":

In 1987 she had emphasized foreign debts and a failing system of justice. A year later she backpedalled on foreign debt and made virtually no mention of the justice system. Then last year justice was again featured, but so far the only evidence of change has been the relative speed with which authorities have gone after the participants in the December coup.

Aquino had deluded herself in thinking she had established a new system: "Politics in the Philippines had perhaps avoided the excesses of crony business-

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

men and local warlords, but in the opinion of many Filipino and Western analysts, it had gone back even farther—to the era before the imposition of martial law.”

Summing up, the publication wrote that

Missing in the Philippines is the greater sense of nation which in the US affects the way Congress sees its role. And inherent in that is the absence of a real political party structure where legislation and legislative priorities could be thrashed out. “Patronage is so strong that the way Congress is formed it just can’t get around it,” says one critic. “Very little is decided in the national interest. It all comes down to who owes who.”

The removal of the Peace Corps

It must have cost U.S. Ambassador Platt some agony to take the step of withdrawing the 261 Peace Corps volunteers from the Philippines, since he realized that it would be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the Aquino government, and he has at times appeared a more faithful defender of her interests than those of his own government. (Col. Nick Rowe, R.I.P.) However, an Ambassador who receives a report that 261 Americans, most stationed in rural areas naked to assassins, were being targeted by the NPA, he was forced to bite the figurative bullet. The Aquinistas screamed bloody murder—*et tu, Brute!* — but they were then forced, even the anti-Americans, to admit, first, that any previous consultation with the Philippine government would have leaked at once, and that despite the AFP’s boasts that it had the NPA’s on the run, there was no way to protect such exposed targets. All remaining criticisms died out when it was announced that one volunteer, Timothy Swanson, had in fact been kidnapped in Negros Occidental. So Ambassador Platt was forced to play the hostage negotiation game as the NPA debated among themselves the costs and benefits of liquidating the young man as an “agent of American imperialism” *versus* picturing themselves as humanitarians by releasing Swanson, along with a Japanese peace corps representative captured at about the same time. In the end, they reaped another propaganda bonanza and stalled an AFP offensive in Negros, but Swanson and Mizuno were returned unharmed, and Ambassador Platt was soon launching a damage control action, asserting illogically (1) that withdrawing the Peace Corps was *not* a sign of instability, but (2) that its return would be a sign of renewed American faith in the stability of her government. The Ambassador seemed strangely unembarrassed by this role, in which he appeared less the representative of the United States government in the Philippines than Mrs. Aquino’s spokesman to the American business community in the Philippines.

Ambassador Platt did not resolve his dilemma without overhearing some rude remarks. Under their breath, American businessmen and American armed forces personnel spoke critically, if understandingly, of the spectacle of the Ambassador’s undignified postures, while Mrs. Aquino’s courtiers were of course unrepentant. He can never do enough for their Queen. *Mr. and Ms.* (7/17/90)

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

believed the move was part of U.S. pressure to secure a renewal for its leases on the military bases:

That their recall was intended as one of the pressure-squeezes in the military bases problem facing both governments . . . President Aquino felt disappointed, particularly as the U.S. government did not consult with her over the matter. She believes the security risk situation isn't all that bad as U.S. intelligence believes.

Signs of Dissatisfaction and Concern

Even Ambassador Platt's exertions could not cover up evidence of a lack of business confidence in Mrs. Aquino's government. A report issued by a multinational company in the Philippines called attention to the departure of 11 of their members for Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand in the preceding five months, the American Chamber of Commerce reported that 57(!) Senate bills hostile to multinationals had been introduced in Congress, and a garbled report that Mark Black of American Express and a first vice President of the Chamber had "fled" to Hong Kong was published. This report was soon denied, but on July 17, a group of U.P. economists warned of a looming new crisis which would require a sharp devaluation of the peso, reduced debt service repayments and greater government reserves, making the point that "problems could no longer be blamed on deposed President Marcos." Solita Monsod, Mrs. Aquino's dismissed economic planning secretary, was among the group publishing the report, and she reiterated her views in her thrice-weekly columns in the *Star*.

The economists' report was aimed at the Palace; another talented lady, Miriam Santiago, whom the Congress had refused to confirm as Agrarian Reform Secretary, seemed to be reaching out to the legislature, whose politicians she despised, by endorsing a Congressional proposal to reduce the Cabinet from its then 20-plus members to 12: "I am in favor of reducing the Cabinet to 12 members only. At present, it is bloated, inefficient, and unquietly. Some Cabinet members are no longer the President's alter egos. They are plain and unproductive egos, period." Mrs. Santiago was now on the campaign path, making several speeches a month throughout the Philippines. It was not yet clear what position she sought, but she was building formidable political strength. Miriam was an excellent speaker, and her audiences were enthusiastic.

The Case for President Aquino and Kabisig

The Manila *Bulletin* is said to be the only newspaper Mrs. Aquino reads. Its owner, Emilio Yap, who made profitable deals with President Marcos, was quick to hire two enthusiastic Corystas, Alejandro Roces and Napoleon Rama, as president and publisher after February 1986, and he quickly converted his fabulously profitable newspaper into an organ only slightly less favorable to the new regime than *Mr. and Ms.* and the *Inquirer*, though like all publishers, Don Emilio kept one or two critical voices to show what a broadminded dispenser

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

of news and opinion he is. Thus, in this month of tears, the *Bulletin's Panorama* (7/22/90) still sought, and found, much to praise in Mrs. Aquino's administration. It astonishingly discovered (in the words of Jamil Maidan Flores) that "a new light shafted through . . . [the] gloom:

. . . the President of the Philippines goes through the bustle of her presidency with the gait of one who has caught on to something good. Her smiles are fuller and more frequent, and she cracks wise with perfect ease.

"I have never seen her more animated than she is now," says a cabinet member, not one of those shadowy unelectables, but the popular and effective Oscar Orbos.

The reason for all this illumination, wrote Flores, was *Kabisig*, the President's new movement formed by the NGO's, the non-government organizations. Cory was pleased, reported Flores, "at the sight of so many Filipinos wanting to do their share." *Kabisig*, President Aquino told Flores, was her answer to the people who aspired or conspired to "bring her down or simply destabilize her government." She had advocated reconciliation with her opponents, she insisted, she had tried it, but now she was exasperated. "Now I won't have anything to do with them." Flores was sympathetic: "she must now accept the brutal fact of political life that no President, however conciliatory(!), can be without enemies." So Mrs. Aquino was turning to the unselfish people who believed in her. She would rely on them, through the NGO's. Flores was overjoyed that Mrs. Aquino had "seized the initiative," writing that "the sense of drift that once prevailed in the government bureaucracy is being replaced by a mix of apprehensiveness, hope and enthusiasm." However, Mrs. Aquino rejected the accusation that *Kabisig* was intended as her political party. "If my goal was reelection . . . I would have become the president of one of those political parties. It is no secret that the LDP offered its presidency to me at one time or another."

The president, continued Flores, claimed great economic progress, temporarily interrupted by the December failed coup. The Department of Agrarian Reform had increased by 85% its hectareage distribution over the year before; the (undefined) incidence of poverty had been reduced from 59% to 49%. She rejected accusation that she was indecisive, observing that even Gorbachev(!) was being accused of being indecisive, and she was fully in charge of the government. She had abolished the *Batasán*, even though that had made Judge Cecilia Muñoz-Palma cry, and she had kept Imelda Marcos out of the country "because of security implications." Flores had no doubts of Cory's mastery of events: "She was in control of the presidency, that is obvious if you eavesdrop on a cabinet meeting. She has a way of bringing down her hands flat on the table to put an end to discussion. . ."

Flores' fictitious picture is one of total decisiveness. The president is in charge of everything, cool, untroubled, certain not only she is right, but *has been* right in all her major decisions, and that she is God's instrument for bringing democracy and prosperity to the Filipinos. . . The irony of this article is that it appeared on July 22, six days after the earthquake that devastated not only Baguio and large parts of the Northern Philippines, but again demonstrated the

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

incompetence and fumbling of her government.

The Earthquake of July 16 and the Government's Performance

The first round-up of events following the earthquake was that of Robert Reed of the Associated Press, who reported on July 25 that "the earthquake . . . caught President Aquino's government ill-prepared for disaster and dramatized her administration's organizational shortcomings." Three days later, the government still had no comprehensive picture of the damage or the casualties.

The Palace characteristically treated this report as a calumny, but offered no evidence in rebuttal, and on the sixth, Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, head of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (set up originally by Executive Secretary Alex Melchor for President Marcos, which functioned effectively in reacting to typhoons and other calamities) claimed that the NDCC was not designed to deal with earthquakes(!). Ramos failed to explain why government had no communication facilities, such as single sideband radios, which would not have been damaged by the quake, and thus able to supply the prime missing element, communications, without which relief could not be effectively mounted. The government was embarrassed (though greatly assisted) by the fact that for several days all information was provided by private broadcasters. Jose de Jesus, Cabinet member in charge of relief operations for Baguio City, finally admitted that confusion had characterized the reaction, "resulting in the impression that the operations were obstructed by red tape." General Ramos denied that red tape had delayed the dispatch of relief missions from Olongapo, as reported by Mayor Gordon. In any case, everything was now functioning effectively. (The stock Filipino excuse for shortcomings is to deny that any exist, but that they are being rectified!)

Bitter criticisms of the government's ineptitude were modified but not refuted by the later heroic work of the PMA cadets and Benguet miners, and sensible heads had wise counsel for both government and its critics. Tatad (*Newsday*, 7/18/90) observed:

Whatever checks Secretary Carague can sign in Cabanatuan cannot possibly make up for the total unpreparedness of the regime to meet the emergency's basic requirements. Once more, the regime was caught flat-footed; or put another way, the calamity proved that no mechanism was in place to respond quickly and adequately to an emergency of the present magnitude.

Tatad lashed out at the government for its false pride:

Motivated by false pride, the regime deliberately avoided asking the U.S. government for rescue assistance, despite the fact that only the US facilities at Clark and Subic have readily available rescue equipment. No explanation was given, but a minor functionary let the cat out of the bag when he said on radio that since the December 1989 coup attempt when US F-4 Phantom jets saved the Aquino regime from falling into rebel hands, Malacañang had decided not to ask the US military facilities for any assistance.

. . . Thus Tatad fully acknowledged what Ambassador Platt was later at pains to deny. (If the Ambassador had known, he might have consoled himself with

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

the knowledge that the Marcos government had similarly, for reasons of face, failed to request help in locating an aircraft with U.S. and German aid personnel which had crashed.)

Ople (*Bulletin*, 7/22/90), as usual, offered a broader perspective of the government's performance, cunningly avoiding the word "incompetent", choosing instead the obfuscatory adjective "incoherent". (Was this an editor's correction?) He wrote that "an incoherent government in the midst of a national disaster is disastrous by itself," adding that "the President's men wrote complicated procedures for processing foreign aid." He particularly condemned the administration for "bargaining with human lives":

This is not the time to bargain over human lives, Filipino lives, in one of the worst disasters of our entire history. It is essential to separate the two, but to belabor this point merely betrays our deeper insecurities. . .

The government, of course, did not hesitate to seek US help when its own existence was threatened. The subsequent efforts to downgrade the impact of that assistance on the outcome of the December coup attempt betrayed a nagging discomfort about that incident. The discomfort persists to this day, explaining the irresolution about accepting US assistance in what is clearly a nonpolitical, humanitarian cause.

. . . Ambassador Platt might have heeded this comment, instead of spending his energies papering over the government's ineptitude.

Ople also drew attention to the President's failure to address the nation. For a government so neurotic about its image that it devoted much of its energy to seeking photo opportunities for the President, this seemed a strange omission, explicable only by the disheartening suspicion that there was insufficient information even on what had happened and was going on to permit a Presidential call to rally in support of the stricken.

"Once More into the Breach"

On August 20, it was again Ambassador Platt who seized the Filipino standard from the faltering, bemused Philippine authorities and stormed the redoubts of world skepticism concerning Mrs. Aquino's government. In a speech almost certainly prepared to celebrate his own three year anniversary in the Philippines, he had intended to focus on the "staying power of Filipino-American friendship," but it was recast as yet another tribute to Mrs. Aquino and her government. The Ambassador delivered himself of the following remarkable judgments: "the Philippines was a wonderful place to do business" (Tell that to the multinationals which had left!); new American investments continued to flow in at the rate of \$120 million per year" (How much of this was attributable to U.S. and foreign government grant?); the Philippine balance of trade was favorable to the tune of 50% over last year's \$640 million (Yet the Philippines was running a heavy overall balance of imports against exports); that the heads of state recently meeting in Houston had singled out the Philippines for its "courageous effort to consolidate democracy" (this was not only *blah*, but an evasion); the Americans had been building schools and bringing in books (perish the thought

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

that this duplicated the USAID-financed Marcos schoolhouses).

But then the Ambassador turned to what the earthquake had made his real theme—once again to inflate the balloon of the Aquino government: “I was on the telephone with President Aquino within an hour of the tremor, and I found that she and her colleagues were already mobilized and organized. I said, “What can we do?”. . . There was no red tape. There was no waiting. And we were able to put things together almost immediately as a result of the friendship that we have and the closeness of our cooperation over the years.” All this, Platt reminded his listeners, had happened in a country that (Praise the Lord!) “has strengthened democratic institutions, continued economic progress, reduced its debt burden, and countered an insurgency.”

. . . This *Te Deum* was not performed by Cardinal Sin in the Cathedral, but by Ambassador Platt before the Rotary Club of Manila.

The Dangers of Philippine Dependency on the U.S.

Over ten thousand miles distant, Platt’s anodynes failed to soothe the nerves of some American officials. *U.S. News and World Report’s* issue of July 30 had pointed out something that the U.S. Embassy in Manila stubbornly refused to concede—that “independence is a necessity if the new democracies hope to survive.” The apostles of a new clientelism had to learn different behavior patterns. *USNWR* reported:

At high levels in the Bush administration, Saint Cory, the housewife Joan of Arc, has been decanonized. “She’s in way over her head. She’s got no political sense,” warns a U.S. diplomat who predicts Aquino will make it to the end of her term in 1992 “only because everyone else will be too busy campaigning to care.”

The magazine referred to the Philippine political culture, which the Manila Embassy’s representatives refused to acknowledge:

A third theory writes off the cultures of Panama, the Philippines and Nicaragua as fundamentally anti-democratic and probably irredeemable. “Either Spain or the Catholic Church, but something screwed up these places bad,” says the U.S. diplomat.

There is one more theory: That America is partly responsible for the messes. These three countries share not only Spanish clonialism and Catholicism; they also share a century of American colonialism and a conviction verging on the religious that Uncle Sam will always make things right.

That aid can cripple as well as cure is a relatively new insight. *USNWP* is right when it observed: “However well-intentioned, U.S. support can become a crippling excuse for avoiding tough choices.”

Foreign Policy editor Charles Williams wrote (correctly) of Mrs. Aquino that instead of taxing the wealthy or reforming her country’s near feudal land holdings (her family is one of the country’s largest landowners) Aquino is asking Congress for more aid. “We’re never going to give them enough to solve their problems, just enough to think they can avoid them,” he says. The Philippines will get more than \$500 million from the U.S. this year.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Speaker Mitra Calls for a New Leader

As related above, Mrs. Aquino's reaction to her facing popularity and the ineffectiveness of her government was an attempt to call upon the populist groups that had made it possible, along with the indispensable assistance of a military mutiny and U.S. intervention, to drive President Marcos from the country. This was the *Kabisig*, based on the NGO's, which were to reduce the role of, if not replace the Congress ("fast-tracking") in the execution of government policy. The negative reaction of a Congress which she sought to emasculate could have been expected, but the equally negative reaction of the media was probably unanticipated if, as reported, Mrs. Aquino never reads anything unfavorable to her or her administration. The media and the public were no more dissatisfied with Congress than with her Cabinet and the government departments on which she would have to rely to assist *Kabisig*, and whereas the Congress stands at arms length from the electorate except during campaigns, citizens are in daily contact with the departments of government. The public expression of dissatisfaction with their performance was deafening.

When speaker Mitra, on August 2 called for a "new leader" before Rotary, it was therefore hardly a surprise, but in its denunciation of regression, his indictment of the government was sensational:

Once we were second only to Japan in economic power; while, politically, we were democracy's showcase in this part of the world.

Today we're the odd man out in a region growing at the world's fastest rate. Thailand overtook us in income per head in 1981; and now even Indonesia is breathing down our necks.

Not only do we have the worst income-distribution pattern in all of East Asia. We also have almost one half the 70 million of the poor in the region outside China.

Mitra conceded that part of the explanation was the Communist insurgency and military *coups*, but he also blamed "an incompetent, bloated and corrupt bureaucracy, which had driven underground more than half of the national economy." The country could grow by 9-10% annually, if the government would only get out of the way, deregulating the economy and withdrawing from business. Red tape must be slashed and business success be based "not on how politically powerful my family nor on *who* I know in the Cabinet." The latter part of Mitra's jeremiad described a scene which was uncannily reminiscent of the last years of the Marcos regime; and Mitra urged in its place a "constitutional succession to the presidency". A military *coup* was no answer, nor even winner-take-all elections. However, Mitra's opinion was a repudiation not only of Mrs. Aquino's taunt that she was in power and her opponents weren't, but also his own Tammany-style politics:

I think we've all had enough of intrigue and hatred, of plotting and revenge. We've had enough of the whole country being made the arena for factional struggles. We've seen enough of winner-take-all elections to know that in elections like those the country always loses. We've had enough of political operators whose sole interest is, "What's in it for me?"

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

Mitra closed by calling for a leader who could bring Filipinos together. Factionalism (*Kabisig*) would only perpetuate the mess. A democratic government "must be established which need not be corrupt, need not be irresponsible government". His final appeal to the businessmen who chiefly constituted Rotary membership was "not to give up on our country":

Don't run away to California; don't retreat to the private security of your money. The worst thing you can do is to be indifferent. The worst thing you can do is to do nothing, because you're afraid you can't do enough.

. . . The detached observer must call attention to Mitra's late arrival on the road to Damascus. He had been the epitome of a partisan Congressional leader, and he had used Congressional allowances and power to strengthen the President's faction until she turned against Congress. It should also be pointed out that Mitra's rejection of non-democratic shortcuts was not only oratory; reputable public opinion polls had shown a strong shift which might augur support for a non-elective change in government. Felipe Miranda (*Newsday*, 8/2/90), a university pollster, had found that people's expectations had changed radically for the worse: people were poorer, public safety had declined seriously, and the perception that "the nation as run by a powerful few" had made the public ripe to welcome a non-electoral solution.

The Salonga Seminars

Months ahead of Speaker Mitra's defiance of the President, Senate President Salonga had been inviting Congressmen and occasionally media representatives to his resthouse in Pansol, near Los Baños, for informal sessions on the problems of the nation. These meetings had generally seen serious, non-partisan discussions of major problems, and had undoubtedly contributed to raising debate to a higher level than usual in the halls of either the Senator or the House. A column by the *Inquirer's* pro-Cory Olivares-Cunanan offers a glimpse on what went on in one of Jovy's seminars. The subject matter was the U.S. military bases, and proceeded in an atmosphere described by the columnist as above the battle: "The Pansol reflections hosted by Senate President Salonga have become noted as much for their frank and candid discussions of vital issues as for the refreshing cultural fare offered during the lunch break."

Those participating included 15 Senators, 3 Congressmen, Secretary Manglapus, U.P. President Abueva, "historian" Renato Constantino and Roberto Flores, who heads the Subic Naval Base labor union. Excerpts from the colloquium included the following:

Talk of the possibility of converting Subic base into a privatized commercial corporation in Filipino hands, which would service not only American warships but vessels of other nations as well, elicited various reactions. Senator Letty Shahani, . . . wondered aloud whether we have the necessary "global vision" to look at a commercial Subic maritime complex beyond "domestic parochial use." Can we make it competitive with Guam, or Singapore? Bataan Representative Felicito Payumo . . . stressed, . . . the need for rigid quality control and an existing work ethic among our Filipino workers in order to

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

enable a privatized Subic to compete with facilities of other nations.

Senate Minority Floor Leader Juan Ponce Enrile . . . participated actively in the dialogue and his wealth of experience in government enabled him to lend a historic perspective to the discussions. . . Perhaps because of his background as former defense minister, Enrile's preoccupation was with national security questions. He queried Manglapus on whether there have been studies regarding the vital national interest of this country, "in terms of strategic enemies or external enemies, and in terms of our security build-up. . .

[Senator] Mercado stressed that "cash-register diplomacy" cannot be a substitute for sovereignty. He decried that there is a perception that we are not serious about removing the bases, but a decision must be made, he stressed, even if there will be people who will get hurt.

There was skepticism about the needed political will to put an end to the bases' stay, as expressed by Senator Nina Rasul. Butz Aquino also stressed that contrary to the notion that all Filipinos want the bases out, and that it is only a matter of time, he did not think that this is the reality.

. . . It is reassuring that when not speaking to the media. Filipino leaders offered some evidence that they are capable of thought as well as bombast.

"Danding" Cojuangco Tours the Provinces

Relatively little press notice was taken of Danding Cojuangco after his birthday in June. It was known that he had had a throat operation in July, but finally, on August 8, his enemy, the *Inquirer*, reported without visible malice that Danding had announced his intention to run for the presidency in 1992 to supporters in Tagbilaran, Bohol and that before his incursion into the Visayas, he had been present at the christening of "a child of an opposition politician" attended by other *ninongs* and *ninangs* including Governor Espinosa of Masbate, Rep. Salvador Escudero, Mayor Jose Timonera, Mrs. Raul Tee, wife of the ex-governor of Sorsogon, and vice Goernor Rosalio Alberto of Catanduanes. According to the *Inquirer's* reporter, this was "the entire Bicol bloc". It was not, Governor Villafuerte and other Bicol strongmen were not present, but it was a strong Bicol nucleus, most of whom were Marcos loyalists.

A Heroin Bust Kills High-ranking PC Officers

The Philippines has slipped behind the rest of Southeast Asia in economic development, but in the entertainment industry and in crime, it is still at the top of the heap. Lea Salonga captured the sought-after role in Miss Saigon; two high level casualties on a heroin shoot-out demonstrated a more dubious achievement on July 10. The scandalous implications of the affair, however, only became known in early August. General Lim's NBI agents had killed PC Colonel Rolando de Guzman and Major Franco Calanog in a shoot-out which three American agents of the DEA had helped set up. The NBI reported that the two victims had gone for their guns when the NBI surprised them on the scene, but later testimony strongly suggested that since they were known to be involved in the drug traffic, they were set up and murdered. Because both victims were Philippine Constabu-

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

lary members, the Philippine Armed Forces defiantly gave them a military funeral and began an investigation of the incident when Mrs. Aquino sought to abort its inquiry by naming her own investigative team. She was at first forced to allow the PC to continue its inquiry by threats that refusal might bring on another *coup*. It was an unsavory affair, and Teddy Locsin, Mrs. Aquino's faithful knight-errant, despite no longer being made welcome at Malacañang, offered his (and the U.S. Ambassador's) standard counsel: "Rally around the President." Though he was obliged to admit that her government had butchered earthquake relief, and found that the Philippines appeared to be establishing a new record for criminality—"a coup for cocaine", he again offered a brief for Mrs. Aquino.

There is no question that the Aquino government's rescue and relief efforts were flawed, and that, in the same bungling hands in which Mrs. Aquino has chosen to repose the reconstruction effort, it too will fail dismally. But governmental deficiency we can live with, albeit with great pain. An armed forces threatening a coup for cocaine is intolerable and has, in fact, not happened anywhere in the world.

Whether we like it or not, the fate of Mrs. Aquino's government is tied up with our fate and our freedom. We are equally threatened by one and the same armed forces which has decided, in a parody of Nancy Reagan, to "just say Yes" to drugs. Now is the time to rally around Mrs. Aquino. No questions asked.

Benazir and Cory, Soulmates

Even the politically unstructured saw the parallels between Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and Cory Aquino in the Philippines, but a remarkable despatch from Islamabad which appeared in *Newsday* on August 8 offered, in its description of Benazir, a characterization so applicable to Cory that it was made the subject of an editorial by publisher Tatad a day later.

The Islamabad interviewer wrote:

Less than two hours after Benazir Bhutto's political fall was announced on national television by the country's president, the landlord's daughter who won international renown with her beauty, intelligence and stated devotion to democracy in Islamic Pakistan exuded those same traits.

The reporter noted some differences, but more likenesses to Cory's government, after Bhutto's 20 months of "shaky rule". She "had difficulty sharing power" and "seemed increasingly to view the world as composed of two groups: those who were with her, and those who were against her." She believed that reported dissatisfaction was all part of a conspiracy against her:

"They killed my father because they knew that he would win any elections he stood for," she said. "They know that I will win any election that I stand for."

Substitute "husband" for "father" and Benazir is Cory. The *Doppelgänger* impression is pervasive; is this Islamabad or Manila? For a year,

friends have been telling Bhutto that the enemies she saw around her would best her if she did not make peace with her foes, if she did not broaden the base of her power in Pakistan, and if she did not insist that those associated with her be honest or at least subtle in their financial dealings.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

"Half these people (in the army and the political opposition) she saw as her father's murderers," Maleka Lodi, an editor and female contemporary of Bhutto's, said in an interview one day before Bhutto's dismissal.

Another woman critic of Benazir was venomous:

"Have you seen her on (American) TV? Charm just oozes out of her. There she was in her diamonds and pearls talking (on CBS' "60 Minutes") about the poor women of Pakistan. It stinks.

Tatad observed that Mrs. Bhutto's sudden fall was made possible by Pakistan's parliamentary system, and analyzed certain differences in the two *persona*, rendering a verdict in favor of the Pakistani:

... while Benazir's prime ministership looked like the Aquino presidency in its defects, Benazir tended to show stronger political capability and intellectual sense than Mrs. Aquino. Her beauty and reputation for intelligence and political acumen had preceded her ascent to power, while nearly universal doubt about Mrs. Aquino's ability preceded hers.

Tatad was uncertain whether Benazir's fall presaged Cory's. The forthcoming Philippine presidential election in 1992 was already absorbing the attention of the Filipinos, but Tatad wanted her out earlier:

More placid times may have allowed Mrs. Aquino to absent herself from the most urgent business of government. But domestic and international crises require an alertness totally incompatible with that. A ship that dares to set out in the middle of a storm must turn out what Bagehot calls the pilot of the calm, and bring in the pilot of the storm. No stronger storm has raged before our eyes, and Mrs. Aquino has proved herself unfit even to be a pilot of the calm.

A week later, Blas Ople in the *Bulletin* (8/16/90) also spoke of Benazir-Cory similarities and differences: corruption in both cases ("I have yet to see a single dissenting opinion to the proposition that Prime Minister Bhutto's government had been grossly incompetent, faction-ridden, and obsessed with self-aggrandizement"), but immense central power was lodged in the hands of the Pakistani and not the Philippine President. Ople, echoing others in both countries, raised the basic question of whether democracy was actually possible in either setting:

can democracy really work and endure in the setting of underdeveloped, semi-feudal economies, where the culture of patronage, blind partisanship, family vendettas, and shortsighted gain overwhelm the shy claims of the public interest most of the time? We are often reminded that democracy is not the natural order, that it is the most difficult form of government because it calls for responsible leaders and a responsible citizenry.

The Lady Miriam Announces her Presidential Candidacy

Miriam Santiago, the highly successful past Commissioner of Immigration, who failed to obtain the Congressional Committee on Appointment's approval as Secretary of Land Reform (Benjamin Leong from the Department, with lukewarm farmer support, was eventually raised to Secretary), announced in August that she would be a candidate for President in 1992. Actually, she had been campaigning for some time throughout the country, showing herself to

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

be a highly effective speaker before small groups, reminding one of President Macapagal's successful four years of barnstorming against President Garcia. Like Macapagal, she campaigned against graft and corruption, and on the U.S. bases, advocated a gradual phase-out to avoid an increase in unemployment.

None of the dopesters had selected her as a potentially successful candidate for President (she rejected a possible nomination for vice President), and her appeal was chiefly to the same group that support Mrs. Aquino, but she has the support of no party. Even without strong party support, she might be a successful Senatorial candidate, but not President or vice President.

Karnow and Fallows Report Cory as Failing

In September, visiting U.S. journalists Stanley Karnow and James Fallows, like vultures, flew in to report that Cory's government was on a "downhill slide," drawing on published comments like Nestor Mata's (*Standard*, 8/23/90) as well as interviews, to announce that the country was losing \$1.5 billion yearly to grafters. Mata wrote:

Her administration, as we consistently noted during her first thousand and more days in office, is so incompetent, inefficient, and inutile that what we have now is the worst this country has ever experienced—in the delivery of basic public services, in mounting violence, in the deterioration of peace and order, in political uncertainty, in bureaucratic tangles, in inept officials, in economic paralysis.

Their reports predictably set off an explosion of press releases from Malacañang featuring Secretary Orbos' counter-blast that nobody could beat Aquino in a snap election. Orbos did not explain that his prediction was based on the assumption that the Opposition leaders would fail to unite, like Mrs. Aquino and Senator Laurel, Butz Aquino and Pimentel in 1986, until the last minute. There were opponents who would win over her (particularly Danding Cojuangco) if the Opposition leaders today (Laurel, Cojuangco, Enrile plus a potential Mitra who is a personal friend of Danding's) should unite as did the Opposition in 1986. Cojuangco has announced that he was sure Mrs. Aquino would serve out her term despite *coup* threats, and he was speaking for all candidates, including outsiders like Estrada and Santiago, but of course not for any of the military rebels.

Impressive additional evidence of the President's decline in support was the report of Bishop Ted Bacani, an original Cory enthusiast, rendered at a hastily-called conference at Malacañang. Blas Ople (*Bulletin*, 9/16/90) recorded the meeting:

Bacani told President Aquino he had canvassed opinion among the Catholic bishops and found their support of her government greatly diminished. He said a government that could not even collect the garbage could not have the political will to achieve much else.

The rest of the President's multi-sectoral conference, which used up two hours and twenty minutes, ranged over a wide range of current issues covering national security, finance, employment, media and human rights, but a certain

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

gravitational pull kept bringing it back to the unsolved crises of Metro Manila. Patty Licuanan, vice president of the Ateneo, said the public perception of the government's incompetence was based on the evidence of the senses: for example, the lack of action on potholed streets.

Humiliatingly, the governments' most vulnerable point was garbage disposal:

I [Ople] told the President, Metro Manila had definitely become the dirtiest metropolis in East Asia. Bacani's perception was right: the control of garbage was highly strategic, if it could be done, it would signal a rebirth of political will, metropolitan pride and national self-confidence. Much of the nation's pessimism radiates from Metro Manila and its sense of helplessness in coping with the many crises of daily life. . .

I reminded the President that three years ago, she constituted herself as a committee of one to solve the crisis. She did not succeed because there was no rational and coherent management structure in the metropolis to carry out her instructions.

Garbage in fact provoked the first whisper of protest ever by Ambassador Platt at Mrs. Aquino's misgovernment. When Jojo Binay, Makati's tough-guy Mayor (whom some columnists call "Rambolito") dumped garbage off Roxas Boulevard, Manila's scenic boulevard close to Seafront, the Embassy's residence and recreational center, the Embassy actually protested to the Foreign Ministry.

More Unsolicited Advice to Cory on the Military Rebels

Despite repeated evidence that she not only ignores but resents unsolicited advice, at least three voices flaunted their opinions in September on how to deal with the military rebels, who had switched from major assaults to raids and nuisance bombings. The first was from Noy Novela of *Mr. and Ms.* in his weekly chronicle for August 29 - September 4, 1990, who commented on a new threat by President Aquino "to crush these traitors". He loved Cory, but he was skeptical:

What other powers of the presidency vested in her by the Constitution and other laws of the land hasn't she used yet to capture and punish these rebels? Time and again, she has ordered her loyal military to go after Gringo Honasan and company but the latter remain free, easily managing to make themselves invisibly visible in military camps with their propaganda and recruitment efforts. This is no longer the time for any hesitation. If President Cory still has aces up her sleeves with which to stop the rebels from doing their thing, now is the time to use them. But even if she does, there is no guaranty of success. Gringo, after his previous arrest and escape, has seemingly been always one step ahead of his hunters.

On September 2, a critic writing in the pro-Cory *Inquirer*, Ninez Cacho-Olivares, explained that the military had as little reason to trust Cory as *vice versa*:

It is the rebel military that can, without firing a single shot, bring down Aquino [and] her tottering regime. Yet she and her officials rejected the rebel group's offer of peace issued after the July quake.

Aquino appears to prefer more complications in her life. The military is fiercely anti-communist. It has, in fact, accused Aquino of coddling communists. Yet she says, through her spokesman, that the Left is more reasonable

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

since it is not interested in power but a better life. . .

Aquino's problem has always been with the military—rebel or otherwise. She is president and commander-in-chief, yet she has neither command nor control over the government's armed forces. It is the armed forces that control her. . .

A lot of people may not like it, but the only road to peace with the rebels is for Aquino to offer them total amnesty. . .

Filipino journalism's *ipse dixit* and former Cory speech writer, Teddy Locsin (as usual) laid down the law in the *Globe* (9/10/90):

The anti-junta rally at EDSA was pathetically small. Such affairs should never be held again. Not even to celebrate the February Revolution because, despite accusations of *hakot* (busing), attendance has unmistakably dwindled—even if Palace *sip-sips* (flatterers) keep assuring that it has in fact grown. No one is going out there to see drug-addicts mimic the passing heroism of nuns, priests, and the middle-class, the wry compassion of General Tadiar's Marines. . .

At this point in time, it is not people power that we should vainly attempt to demonstrate. Rather should the plain immorality of military adventurism and political irresponsibility be scored. And that can best be done from the one place to which the nation again looks for pragmatic guidance, as much as wit. The house of (Cardinal) Sin in Shaw.

Let the words go forth then from that place against a heartless military playing games of "threat-rescue" with the country, against witless officials planning martial law to stave off justice after 1992 or building a road for Tan Yu, and against those workers in our vineyard who are moonlighting with the IMF and the Paris Club.

Finally, Blas Ople, who believed he had "made a deep impression" on the President (a rare example of wishful thinking on Blas' part) at the multisectoral meeting held in the Palace, urged a general amnesty, which would be open also to military rebels.

The Persian Gulf Crisis

The Filipinos had a heavy stake of the crisis provoked by Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait. There were tens of thousands of Filipino workers, hence hostages, in Kuwait and Iraq when the infamous dictator struck. Evacuating them, even if no obstacles were deliberately imposed, was a daunting problem, and the Philippines' support of American policies was inhibited by their presence in the area, as well as caution imposed by the Philippines Muslim population. As an experienced Secretary of Labor, journalist Blas Ople was probably not only the most experienced, but the wisest adviser. He wrote (*Bulletin*, 8/19/90) that the Filipinos fortunately were well-liked in the Arab world and particularly in Saudi Arabia, where most were skilled or semi-skilled workers, rather than house help, as in nearby countries. In Ople's opinion, the Philippines should anchor its policy on Saudi Arabia:

The Saudis had reacted with dismay to reports that the Philippine government has slowed down the processing of new workers for Saudi Arabia's oil and manufacturing industries.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Our government should comply with their request to restore normalcy in this sphere. Obviously we cannot dispatch troops, but we need not obstruct the sending of workers who have elected to go on their own free will. The President has said that we face a shortage of dollars with which to pay for oil. With a world recession on the horizon, there is just one reliable source left, namely, the earnings of our workers in Saudi Arabia.

The Philippine government used to put a high priority on our relations with the Middle East. At that time, Philippine Cabinet ministers, because of rapport that had been carefully nurtured, could lift their telephones and begin talking to their counterparts in Arab countries. This was especially true of labor, oil and trade.

Ople took pride in the reputation of Filipino workers in the Arab world:

Politically, that impressive presence of Filipino workers, in Saudi Arabia and in the rest of the Middle East, has earned for us the warm appreciation of those countries. This may have been the most critical factor, though the least appreciated, in our successful effort so far to fend off threats to the integrity of our national territory in Southern Philippines. As one Libyan official told me in Tripoli, after having been cared for by Filipino nurses, "I cannot believe a nation like that can commit genocide against Muslims."

Mrs. Aquino's Appointive Aristocracy

Attacks by Speaker Mitra and vice President Laurel in September and October on the extravagance of the Aquino administration highlighted a deepening gulf between rulers and ruled to which no one had hitherto called attention. To be sure, Filipinos took it for granted that the administration in power should liberally reward its supporters, and to be a member of government had always meant entitlements which set its possessors apart from ordinary Filipinos. Under Mrs. Aquino, however, her chief associates had become a visibly high-privileged class—an appointed nobility with a life-style exceeded only by the super-rich. The difference in numbers raised to conspicuously high levels of living and privilege by the government over its predecessor, and its life style, at a time of great hardship for the non-government employee, was striking. Laurel described the swollen ranks of the new aristocracy and the huge sums spent on its maintenance at a time when the country had suffered natural and political calamities that threatened its already badly-impooverished ordinary citizens. Pointing out that the Aquino Cabinet was the biggest in the world(!), with 34 secretaries, 188 undersecretaries and 900 assistant secretaries, costing P34 billion annually, the vice President compared it unfavorably to a Marcos budget of P226 billion for 900,000 employees. The Aquino government's total budget for personnel was P74 billion for 1.1 million workers.

The government was in September 1990 the country's only flourishing industry, and its employees in its higher echelons never lived better. Its highly visible perks, including luxurious offices, trips abroad, and *Pajero* vehicles made available for purchase on easy terms, contrasted with its failure to collect garbage and to meet its commitments to the nation's schoolteachers even more deplorable. Most of the public sympathized with the teachers, but the incon-

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

venience caused parents by their strikes made it possible for the government to shift to the strikers the onus generated by its own failures to live up to financial promises made to the teachers.

Benigno Again Psychoanalyses President Aquino

Teddy Benigno's 3-1/2 years as Mrs. Aquino's press secretary not only landed him a job as a *Star* star columnists, but furnished inexhaustible material for his column. On September 12, he again psychoanalyzed his former boss, as he had at the U.P. Seminar held in January. First he called attention to the burst of activity which she manifested after her fighting speech in November 1987 at the Manila Hotel, which briefly energized her associates:

All the captains of business and industry were enraptured as the President for the first time let loose. The balled fists were in that speech, the first time they saw their President scoff and even sneer at her enemies and her critics, the first time she pledged to vault personally into action on a wide front. Cabinet members present leaped to their feet, nodded to each other exultantly as if to say: "Hey did you see that? She's in a fighting mood! Wow!"

Garbage Cory Aquino would lick and also potholes in the streets. The gentlemen of the Philippine Long Distance Co. were also called in. And there was a promise to stamp out all the assorted ills of the infamous PLDT. Privatization too would sally forth. Manila Hotel and the Philippine Airlines would have to go. Left-wing labor was put on notice that it could no longer terrorize business firms and factories and march in the streets. I have never seen her like this before, firm-faced and solemn, the eyes, intense the voice shrill and sure as a factory whistle.

But nothing happened, and further rhetorical displays have failed to impress. In response to the latest (but not new) scandal, the failure of garbage collection in Metro Manila, Benigno expostulated:

... three years later, Cory Aquino is back at the garbage heaps with virtually the same promise. . . This time it's a little gnome of a man, Makati Mayor Jojo Binay, who promises to do it for her. We hope he succeeds. For if there is one issue that has clung to the President like alley tar and disfigured her prestige more than anything else, it's garbage. "If she cannot succeed in getting rid of garbage, she cannot succeed in anything else", is a comment I often hear from friend and foe alike.

Turning from the ridiculous to the sublime, Benigno left garbage to speak of Masada, the fort held by 1000 Jews against 12,000 Romans two thousand or so years ago. Its defenders would not yield, and the few left finally took their own lives rather than surrender. Benigno thinks Cory has a "Masada Complex":

If there is anything that sustains the President, it is her profound spiritual faith. That explains her serenity, her public smile which her political tormentors want to efface but just can't, her physical ability to withstand crisis after crisis. . . But while it is a formidable strength, it can become a liability when one is president, chief of state, commander-in-chief rolled into one. It is one thing to stay fixed in the Guest House, as she did last December, even as rebel planes bombed Malacañang. She was not one whit scared, and she was ready to die.

Benigno admired the president's courage, but insisted that other qualities are

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

required of a president:

It is another thing, however, to lead a country in a crisis. This demands much more than spiritual faith, hasty improvisation and dedication to duty. . .

Her serenity, her fatalism ill prepare her for nimble maneuvering at the presidential helm. This is what Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher do best. . . They develop no love, no intimacy for any member of their government. So they change them almost at will in Cabinet revamps whenever they are convinced the need is there. They know the value of political drama so they use language as an anvil upon which to hammer strong presidential prose. They know the symbolic impact of a presidential strut, shaking of the fist, a sudden, flamboyant tilting of the jaw. . .

Cory Aquino is a stranger to this kind of leadership. She abhors frills, fanfare and folderol.

Finally, he pictured the internal atmosphere of the Aquino government:

Her closest advisers and collaborators now know her character well and pace themselves like members of a family drilled to accept that Mother knows best. Outside, the political and other typhoons can howl but inside that Guest House, a President holds forth. . .

She cannot understand why the most virulent criticism comes from businessmen who hit it big and got rich under her administration. For her the wax candles of friendship and loyalty must burn forever and she is sad that many of the Cory faithful have left her.

. . . It must be conceded that nearly all of Benigno's analysis is consistent with Cory's past behavior and is more than likely to be predictive of her future. Mrs. Aquino cannot believe that she is not still God's chosen instrument in the Philippines, and that only unfriendly propaganda is responsible for her fading popularity. Her government's execrable performance is in her eyes not a relevant basis of judgment; her opponents are either ignorant or evil.

Miracles and Piety Plummet in Value

September 1990 witnessed another spectacle which might have been scripted by one of Italy's many anti-clerical film directors. Cardinal Sin, in his efforts to shore up support for the staggering Aquino government, was turning himself into a buffoon. Visiting Prague, he had requested, but mercifully been refused, permission by its steward, Cardinal Tomasek of Prague, to borrow the original Holy Child from which Cebu's miraculous Santo Niño statue was said to be copied centuries ago. It was presumably Cardinal Sin's intention to lead another procession of believers in God and St. Cory while bearing the uplifted Holy Child to plead for yet another miracle. *Star* publisher Max Soliven, from Prague, compared (*Star*, 9/21/90) Czech President Havel's and Mrs. Aquino's problems and the Cardinal's initiative:

I hope Havel, God bless him, snaps out of it in time and gets experts, not gifted amateurs and cronies from the political catacombs, to run the show. We've been through all that nonsense ourselves, and after four and a half years of prayers, novenas, pious speeches, and searching for fresh "miracles" have precious little to show for it. It's now quite plain that God helps those who help themselves. (Not for a blessed few to help themselves, in plain sight, to

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

the diminishing pile of goodies.)

A Post-dated Minority Report from the U.S. Embassy

Since early 1988, American Embassy personnel in Manila had resolutely sung an oratorio of praise for the marvels and the promise of the Aquino government, denying every sign of weakness, fumbling and fecklessness. It was therefore remarkable—though little noticed—when a former member of the Embassy, Robert C. Meehan, who had served in Manila in 1981-84, wrote *The American Spectator* (September 1990) to applaud and endorse an article by the magazine's William McGurn, which found Mrs. Aquino's government both corrupt and incapable. The spin McGurn gave to his analysis made the multilateral government lending agencies the chief culprits, which deflected his focus of condemnation from Aquino's government to those agencies, but Meehan's letter brought Mrs. Aquino back to center stage:

The only quarrel I would have with the article is that it was not pessimistic enough. It seems to hold out hope that if the policies of the Manila government and its foreign lenders changed, then things could get better. . . I think that the country is suffering from terminal illness and nothing will stop its further decline.

It is hard for someone who has not lived there to understand just how corrupt and venal the whole system has become. From the cop on the street to the cabinet minister, everyone has his hand out and everyone is . . . accustomed to looking out for number one.

Meehan also had harsh words for Filipino enemies of U.S. policies—criticisms which Embassy personnel have been constrained to soft-pedal if not suppress:

Filipinos have shielded themselves from the hard facts of their sorry existence by blaming it all on the U.S. Again it would be difficult for an outsider to believe the commonly held belief that the Embassy on Roxas Boulevard calls all the shots and the CIA is behind every twist and turn in the nation's political life. Thus, the educated elite rail against this perceived domination and the multitude of Filipinos have cargo cult-like fantasies that Uncle Sam will someday steam into Manila Bay and make everything all better. On my last trip to Manila in 1988 I looked in vain for some sign that the People Power revolution had changed things for the better. As McGurn suggests, nothing has changed and nothing will.

The critic ignored a few bright spots in the Aquino record—the high judiciary or the rare public official of competence—but he called long-overdue attention to the Queen's failings which the Embassy, in the thought that nothing mattered so much as the U.S. military bases, constantly concealed with their extravagant praise or euphemisms.

Another Fruitless Round of Talks on the U.S. Bases

When the renewed negotiations on the future of the American military bases in the Philippines ended after four days, in late September, Ambassador Armitage had nothing to say, but Mrs. Aquino spoke from a dream world that fooled

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

only the uninformed when she said she “was pleased with the initial outcome of the Philippine-American Cooperation Talks (PACT) and was confident that the two countries would arrive at a mutually acceptable and beneficial understanding on many issues.” She added that the Philippine panel

has clearly communicated the government position to the Americans: that sovereign control over Clark Air Base, Wallace Air Station, Camp O’Donnel, Camp John Hay, and the San Miguel Naval Communications Station should revert to the Philippines by September 17, 1991 as mandated by the Constitution.

The rest of her prepared statement added that her government

will carefully consider the proposal of the US for a “phasedown” of the giant Subic Naval Base in Zambales and the commercialization of some aspects of its operation and “shall make our response on this at the proper time.”

She repeated her previous stance that whatever decision her government will have on the bases issue will be anchored on national interest.

Mrs. Aquino said she was pleased with the progress of the talks, and was confident of a future understanding which would be “mutually acceptable and mutually beneficial.”

Tatad headlined his comment “When the Talks Collapsed”, and regretted that “the Filipinos were talking of the 1990s, “[while] the U.S. special negotiator was speaking of the 21st century.” The *Newsday* publisher noted a difference in atmosphere between earlier talks and the most recent (9/24/90):

Compared to the exploratory round held between the two panels last May, and conducted mainly through the media, last week’s negotiations were not publicly as acerbic and stormy. But in private, there was “candor” of the first order. In diplomatic reporting, one does not usually say candid and cordial any more than one says frank and friendly.

But an apparent agreement not to publicize their clashes inside the conference room, aided by the obvious inexperience of those covering the negotiations, helped to obscure the impasse.

The Scandal at the Sweepstakes Office

Foreign residents in the Philippines have often marveled at what the Philippine political culture accepts as unobjectionable behavior. When, in September, 1990, whistle-blowing employees of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes, the biggest gambling lottery in the country, were able to show the National Bureau of Investigation, headed by General Alfredo Lim, that the September 2 draw had been fixed, a thunderous roar of indignation erupted. PCSO President Fernando Carrascoso vowed to punish the guilty, and a highly-publicized investigation was set in motion, handled by General Lim of the NBI, an Aquino favorite.

For years it has been known that the PCSO offers charity to lawbreakers as well as worthy institutions. Vast sums of illegally acquired wealth have been concealed by the claims of high government officials that they won their ill-gotten treasure as lucky sweepstakes winners. (Big operators sometimes purchased winning tickets from actual winners.) It was therefore not a total surprise when the first prize of the September 16 draw—five million pesos—was won by

ONE DISASTER AFTER ANOTHER

General Lim himself. The General expressed pleasure that he had been lucky, emphasizing that he had purchased more than a hundred tickets—but apparently the reputations of those supervising the drawing on this occasion convinced him that it had been honest. It had been witnessed by such conspicuous guardians of the public virtue as PCSO Chairman Fulgencio Factoran, Senator Rene Saguisag, and T.V. host Randy David. Their mere presence was held to demonstrate that any past flaws in the drawings had been corrected, and incredibly to foreigners, the ruckus quieted down.

General Lim has legitimately enjoyed a remarkably scandal-free reputation from the 1960's when he was chief of detectives in Manila, but his acceptance of the 5 million peso prize, despite the near unanimous belief on the part of every knowledgeable Filipino that a buy-off had occurred was remarkable even by Philippine standards of public morality. In successive weeks, widespread skepticism was voiced in many quarters. Even Noy Novela, one of the Aquino government's most faithful supporters, wrote (*Mr. and Ms.*, 9/25/90) when the story first broke:

What compounds the ignominy of the offense is the fact that the offenders literally stole a decent meal or two from every sweepstakes ticket buyer who had to forego the meal just to buy a ticket and a chance to see a better future. Just how many times the public has been swindled this way, one can only guess. But only the naive will surmise that it happened only this time. President Aquino has ordered a thorough probe of the matter and punishment for the guilty. But a great many people will simply raise an eyebrow. She should have on the spot fired all the officials who had anything to do with the draw—from top to bottom—and let the innocent prove their innocence.

On October 2, under the caption "Just Plain Lucky", illustrated by a grinning General Lim, Novela again commented:

Of all people, it had to be Freddie Lim whose office is doing all the sleuthing and investigating of the fraudulent September 2 as well as past draws. The odds on bagging the top prize could be over a million to one and Lim beat those almost impossible odds. Simply lucky. Very lucky. One may buy sweepstakes tickets again and be assured the next draws will be honest ones. And the lesson from Lim's winning would be to buy two full booklets everytime.

Chapter XIV

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

There was no doubt that by October 1990, President Aquino's public support had declined precipitously. The latest Ateneo Social Weather Station Survey showed that in Manila, Mrs. Aquino had dropped to *fifth(!)* preference by voters if a presidential election were to be held at that point. Miriam Defensor Santiago astonishingly led the contenders, polling 41.7% of those responding. Senator Estrada was in second place with 37.1%, Defense Secretary Ramos polled 23.3%, and Senate President Salonga 22.3%—all ahead of those who favored the President. This was a striking decline in popularity, even if the survey polled only Manila, a traditional center of anti-Malacañang sentiment. Another result of the poll was that the President now felt driven to seek to widen her support on the Right. Aquino now interposed no objection to including military *coup* leaders in proposed amnesty legislation. Though she had long been sympathetic toward amnesty for the Communists, this was the first indication that she might be willing to make her peace with the military rebels.

It seemed very likely that Mrs. Aquino's behavior was for the first time directly responsive to her critics—probably because the Davide Commission, composed entirely of her own supporters, had rendered a long and gloomy report both on the president's dwindling popular support and the desperate condition of the nation's economy, which had produced a *Welga ng Bayan*, or general strike. The strike had failed, but it brought serious violence, including the burning of 17 buses. Alarming, it also produced signs of cooperation between right-wing military rebels and Communist killer squads, a cooperation promoted not only by President Aquino's unwillingness heretofore to compromise with the military rebels, but by the sharply-declining indices of government finances, now further threatened by the prospective rise in price of Middle East oil. For whatever reasons, it was an unusually amiable Mrs. Aquino who welcomed her enemies vice President Laurel and opposition Senator Enrile to Malacañang for a meeting at the National Security Council on October 25.

The media warmly greeted the president's change of front, a few attributing it to a change of heart, but most as a tactic prompted by widespread fear that the economy might be facing total collapse. The supply of dollars was tightly constricted not only falling exports and rising imports, but by speculation by commercial banks against the peso. Central Bank Governor Jose Cuisia, Jr. even advocated what he called a "one-time devaluation" to deal with such speculation as well as to increase the competitiveness of Philippine exports. Once again, it was predicted that the President would finally have to yield to the widespread popular demand for a reorganization of her Cabinet in order to get rid of non-performers and perhaps even to offer Cabinet positions to able out-of-office personalities including several who had served under Marcos.

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

A Flawed Decision on the Aquino Assassination

In the first days of October 1990, the Sandiganbayan, trying the case against the military personnel involved in the assassination of ex-Senator Benigno, Jr. on August 21, 1983, reached its verdict, convicting 16 and acquitting 20 of those charged with the murder of Aquino and the decoy assassin Rolando Galman. The chief suspect, General Fabian Ver, was beyond the court's jurisdiction, but a strong case was inferentially made against him when Sgt. Rogelio Moreno was identified as the trigger man and Brigadier General Luther Custodio, Moreno's superior in the Ver chain of command, were both convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. (The Philippines has no death penalty.) The long-delayed verdict was spelled out in very lengthy decision which left most interested parties disappointed. The widowed Mrs. Aquino kept her real feelings to herself, but Senator Butz Aquino, Ninoy's brother, commented that "the mastermind had already died." This statement undoubtedly expressed the family's conviction that the deceased President Marcos had been responsible. (More of the public believed it is the work of General Ver at a time when President Marcos was physically incapacitated.) It was reported that President Aquino still hoped that one of the convicted "would some day tell all," but with responsibility for the Plaza Miranda massacre of August 1971 still unfixed, this seemed doubtful.

The Davide Report

The Report of the Fact-Finding Commission, better known as the Davide Report, was published as a paperback and made available to the public in early November 1990. The Commission called more than 300 witnesses and its product, a bulky 609 pages including appendices, included the work of academics who had contributed liberally. The report was hastily culled by the columnists for quotable one-or two-liners in criticism or support of Mrs. Aquino. During the course of its investigation, after Marcos Solicitor General Mendoza had effectively rebuked its members for attempting to implicate Danding Cojuangco and his brother Enrique, some criticism was heard at the effect that the Commission was wasting the people's time and money. This proved to be inaccurate. The report turned out to be a remarkably thorough if not profound discussion of why *coups* had occurred so frequently during Mrs. Aquino's administration, and though its members took it for granted that her government had not suffered in the same degree from the ills it denounced in its predecessor (graft, manipulated elections, nepotism), it gave space to the military critics of the sorry performance of her government and even called upon Mrs. Aquino to declare herself out of the running for President in 1992.

The Report failed to prove complicity in the coup of December 1989 on the part of Enrile or Cojuangco, but clearly demonstrated that they and vice President Laurel had some prior knowledge of the plot and were friendly toward the plotters.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Max Soliven (*Star*, 10/10/90) noted that the report fully documented the view of "both interventionist and constitutionalist military officers" that the Aquino government was corrupt, that its politicians were superfluous and Cory herself weak. Soliven said the Report made clear that

It's not enough to threaten punishment—the President and the administration must go after grafters and the corrupt, deliver basic services to the nation, and strive to be decisive rather than vacillating. My own observation is that the President likes to talk tough, snarl at those she perceives to be her "enemies", but in dealing with her trusted few, her friends and henchmen (during the Marcos dictatorship, such people were condemned by us as "cronies") she is marshmallow.

The Report itself called attention to the shortcomings in the AFP, the Palace and the Congress that clamored for attention and correction:

As part of the process of self-reflection, the Executive Department must review existing policies and programs and establish clear directions for the next 21 months, particularly in the area of basic services. Government officials who have not performed or are responsible for failed programs have to be replaced. The economic situation and shortfalls in performance relative to targets cannot all be blamed on external factors and inherited problems. . . The expectations is a president will act as a statesman during that period rather than as a politician seeking another term. However, the appointment of new people would only make sense if the correct policies and programs are in place. Two major revamps occurred after coup attempts and were perceived to have been a reaction to the coups rather than a genuine effort to address issues of substance. Subsequent events tended to validate this perception. What is being asked of the Executive Department is to enforce the same principle of accountability being required of the military.

The Commission was composed exclusively of members loyal to Mrs. Aquino, and it is reasonable to assume that she was sobered by its findings. Nonetheless, she appointed Davide to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court.

The Pocket Rebellion in Mindanao

Rebel soldiers under renegade Col. Alexander Noble and a company of mutineers entered Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao, taking over Camp Evangelista as well as, earlier, Brigade headquarters at Butuan City, 250 kilometers distant. They were welcomed by enthusiastic supporters of Reuben Canoy, head of the Mindanao separatist movement. Defense Secretary Ramos hurried home from abroad to call upon loyalist soldiers to overthrow the rebels, which was speedily accomplished. Robert Reed of the Associated Press (10/9/90) quoted Luis Beltran of the *Manila Standard*, who wrote that the revolt called attention to the failure of the Aquino government to address or eradicate the root causes of dissatisfaction with her government. Reed noted the irony that the Davide Commission, established to ascertain the causes of the military rebellion, had issued its report on the same day that Col. Noble struck.

Reed quoted the reaction to the Noble attack by two Commission members:

Delfin Lazaro said pro-coup sentiment existent in at least 12 major units

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

within the 160,000-member armed forces.

"It appears that coups are still likely to happen," Lazaro said.

Another commission member, Dr. Carolina Hernandez, said the government must demonstrate to disaffected military groups that "it is concerned about the issues being raised."

"The reason why they (troops) are involved is because they are involved in peace and order and socio-delivery functions, so they feel they should have a say in all these things that go on."

Apart from these AFP grievances, Canoy's party enjoys a considerable following among non-Muslim civilians who feel that the national government exploits Mindanao's riches for the benefit of Manila. Thus, though they oppose Muslim domination of Mindanao, they make common cause with Muslims against the Aquino government.

Public Turns Positive Toward Base Lease Renewals

There was a softening in the government's position on the U.S. military bases, as the media reported widespread support for their continuation for economic reasons. Ricardo Puno wrote in the *Bulletin* (10/25/90):

There are forces not entirely within the control of either the US or the Philippine governments that influence decision-making in both countries. Events seem to be favoring the US position. Political instability and economic dislocation in the Philippines strengthen that position. Congressional opposition to foreign aid programs, the fear of recession, the sensitivity of the US public to the steadfastness of its traditional allies, all give domestic legitimacy to the US negotiating posture vis-a-vis the bases.

On the other hand, surveys taken in this country recently only confirm what had long been suspected: That the majority of the Filipinos want the US bases to stay. This position is not based on principle but on the economics of the stomach. It is also, at bottom, an expression of considerable skepticism at the way this and previous governments have handled our security situation.

At the same time, a demand for a show of solidarity with the anti-Iraqi coalition was resisted on the grounds that the Philippines simply could not afford to antagonize the Iraqis, who held the whip hand on oil supplies as well as over thousands of Filipinos in Kuwait and Iraq. J. V. Cruz, Marcos' ex-Ambassador to England, trying to return to journalism, pleaded with the government in *Newsday* (10/26/90), the Opposition's chief organ, "not to take sides."

The Appointment of Mel Mathay

A shift in the government's position on the employment of officials who had served under President Marcos was applauded by Adrian Cristobal, who had been both Garcia's and Marcos' mouthpiece, in the pro-government *Inquirer* (10/22/90). He called attention to the pressing into government service of one of Marcos' most competent administrators, Mel Mathay:

Lately, the Administration has been showing signs of life, and if its energy doesn't dissipate into incompetence, at least five major road projects for Metro Manila should be completed by March or April next year. . .

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

This is really simple work, establishing priorities, but for the Aquino Cabinet, it seems difficult enough to require the assistance of a former Marcos official. Mel now joins the third-raters of the former regime who are now Ms. Aquino's top advisers, except that Mel is a first-rate politician and administrator and may do her more good than harm.

Cristobal, normally skeptical about Mrs. Aquino's motivations, thought she had at last learned a lesson:

... the significant thing about the Mathay "draft" is the apparent willingness of Ms. Aquino to recognise at this time the usefulness of the better survivors of the "evil empire," after having had experience with the other kind. Considered under the best light, her initiative suggests that political reconciliation is not objectionable on grounds of the common good.

Despite her desperate need for competent performances, Mrs. Aquino recruited no others who had made a success as Marcos appointees.

Economic Troubles and Fumbles at the Palace

Blas Ople, by his previous services as a Marcos Secretary of Labor, is the best-informed Filipino on the subject of worker's wages. As he put it (*Bulletin*, 10/28/90), most Filipinos lived in a subsistence economy. This was why they flocked to employment abroad despite the hardships of separation from their families and sometimes abusive treatment by alien employers. As an example of more remunerative employment abroad, Ople reported the near-delirious joy of a Philippine Ambassador's driver, after transfer from Manila to Taipei, when he discovered that he now earned P20,000 per month, compared to P1,000(!) in the home country:

A dream drives most of the Filipinos who go overseas. For some, this is to build a house. For others, it is to build a small business. But for the majority, it is to send their children to college. What they seek, in common, is the magic of the disposable income above subsistence.

For most Filipinos, wages are mostly at subsistence level. The debate between a minimum wage raise of P17 or P38 (now scaled down to P25) still does not depart from the framework of subsistence wages in what remains essentially a subsistence economy.

This P17 hourly minimum wage Filipino employers claim is all they can pay their workers and remain competitive in world markets. It is a truly hardship wage, and the traditionally-underpaid Filipino workers at home were now further squeezed by the effects of higher oil prices generated by the threat of war in the Persian Gulf.

Cardinal Sin, a shameless grandstander, had received few plaudits in September and October, but harvested a few when he appealed to employers to raise wages. *Newsday* (11/9/90), the Cardinal's frequent critic, editorialized:

In one of his strongest rebukes of the Aquino administration, the outspoken Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin, has joined the fray in the contentious debate over wages. Throwing his support behind organized labor, the Archbishop castigated employers and government officials with ostentatious tastes and luxurious lifestyles, as he called for higher wage increases for workers.

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

Sin urged the rich and public officials to stop their extravagance for the sake of lowly paid workers. The Archbishop also took the Aquino administration to task for seeking new taxes even as it squandered public funds on dubious projects and ignored basic services.

"If expensive bulletproof mansions are being built from funding sources that are not transparent, while bridges are collapsing and hurling hapless motorists to death in murky waters, can anyone be astonished at the resistance to new taxes, even for the wealthy?" he asked.

The last paragraph was a reference to off-budget funding of the Boroloy building, another unauthorized expenditure on the part of Executive Secretary Macaraig made in order to accomplish, ham-handedly, what was probably a legitimate expense: to build a safer refuge for a President beset by military rebels. As usual, Palace spokesman first denied the story, then claimed that the expense was authorized, and then finally admitted that officials had simply used moneys not yet expended for authorized expenditures to finance this expensive project. Once again, the President had been helped to look devious by her Executive Secretary. Several critics had begun to call Macaraig Mr. "Wala na ho 'yan," or to put the matter in comparable colloquial Americanese, "Don't worry, be happy," when questioned by the President.

The *Star's* Art Borjal, a strong supporter of the President who like nearly everybody else fails to apply the principle of command responsibility to the President, blamed it all on Macaraig, and agitated for his removal:

The absence of a take-charge guy has made the Guest House the playground of the unruly and the undisciplined. Dirty linen and petty and bitter bickerings are washed in public. Cabinet members hitting back at Cabinet members who hit other backs is a common sight. Rumors and intrigues and infighting are a day-to-day happening in the biggest corridor of power. . .

There is a popular clamor for some changes in the Cabinet. We hope the President when she announces that long-awaited change, would make Mr. Wala-Ho Yan as her first target. Should that happen, watch the stock market perk up.

Base Negotiations Resume

In the midst of labor unrest, the U.S.-Philippine discussions on the future of the bases reopened, with moderate Leftist critic Ople taking a conservative position and Solita Monsod, dismissed and disaffected former head of the National Economic Council, damning the President for supine acquiescence in the dictates of the IMF. Ople claimed that economic hardships, multiplied by threatened increases in the price of oil at the pumps, had deprived Mrs. Aquino of "open options", and forced her to yield on the bases. In contrast, the fiery Mrs. Monsod applauded the attitude shown by the ultranationalist Secretary of Health, Alran Bengzon, vice Chairman of the Philippine negotiating panel, who had bridled when Central Bank Governor Cuisia, Finance Minister Estanislao and Defense Secretary Ramos had asked him to muffle his demands for the departure of the Americans from the bases.

Ople had written (*Bulletin*, 11/11/90) of the then-"upbeat mood" at the

FROM SAINT TO SINNER:

American Embassy:

The guests at a crowded reception tendered by Ambassador Nicholas Platt for the US negotiator, Richard Armitage, could sense the upbeat mood of both sides in the RP-US bases talks right on the first day. Both Rafael Alunan and Stanley Schrager, the spokesmen for the Philippine and US panels, respectively, had been giving optimistic briefings on a narrowing of differences. Then the talks were recessed with an appropriate flourish: both parties had agreed to junk the 1947 RP-US Bases Agreement.

Still, Ople noted that Mrs. Aquino was being forced into a corner:

The Aquino government would like a broader treaty of friendship, commerce and cultural exchanges to subsume all concerns falling under national security. This is what it calls recasting the Philippine-American relationship and putting it on a new basis. But it is apparent to the trained eye that his omnibus approach is dictated by domestic political considerations: It is based on the hope that economic and trade concessions can be seen as offsetting the disappointments over the more niggardly gains on sovereignty. . . .

The US controls every window for whatever new money the Philippines may need to bail out its economy. The economic linkage to the bases is something that dilutes rather than enhances the Philippines' bargaining position. The country's real clout can better be felt in straightforward talks that stress the political issues—the primacy of Philippine sovereignty.

Ople foresaw very dangerous times ahead, but even he overlooked what trouble might be expected from another campaign for “omnibus” claims against the U.S.—a tactic in which every Filipino claim against the U.S., however often rejected in years gone by, would be exhumed and pursued with the unshakable conviction that, as they saw it, justice delayed must not be justice denied. Still, Ople's picture was grim enough:

Whatever treaty comes up, or the fate that awaits it in the Senate, the issue of the US bases will summon intense partisan passions and levels of invective seldom matched in national politics. Partisans will label each other “CIAs” and “Communists”. What all this vitriol will ignore is the fact that a broad consensus already exists in the land: US troops and facilities must now withdraw from the Philippines and complete this process in a short period, ranging from one, three, five to ten years and no more.

The dismissed NEDA head Mrs. Monsod was characteristically both blunt and cynical (*Star*, 10/9/90):

On Wednesday, news reports came out, some as banner headlines, about Alran Bengzon's revelations that pressure was being brought to bear on our bases negotiators.

Sure enough, the next day brought disclaimers from Alran that there was no pressure on him, that his words were taken out of context, and that all was peace and light among the Cabinet members. And of course, all parties concerned routinely deny that there is any link between the bases negotiations and anything else.

We know better. Or we should.

It is naive to think that there is no pressure being exerted by the United States for the Philippines to come around to their way of thinking. They are definitely playing hard ball. They are doing it directly, and indirectly—through other governments particularly Japan, and international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. Oh, nothing so crass as “do this, or else”, but as with Alran, it's not what you say, it's what you mean.

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

Solita felt she knew the score from personal experience:

I participated in many negotiations where the message was always the same: give in to all our conditions, or you won't get the money. And instead of putting up a solid front, the Philippine panel gets weakened by people on the team who say, let's get the money now, and worry about the consequences later. The short-term financial benefits take priority over the much larger long-run economic and political considerations.

One feature of these negotiations that had so far not surfaced in the press was that Armitage's negotiating style was beginning to grate. He was reported to be a bully. Admittedly, the Filipinos might in fact be bullied into concessions, but an agreement reached under what appeared to be coercion would be even more likely to be honored by the Filipinos only in the breach than are most of the negotiated agreements between the two parties. It may be that this kind of treatment is necessary and even justified, but there would be heavy costs, and long-term effects were apt to be painful.

Another Supreme Court Blow to Foreign Investment

Ms. Monsod, in another column, had rejected criticisms of the performance of the Aquino government by claiming, among other achievements, a restoration of judicial prestige and competence, but the Supreme Court soon let her down. It held, 7-4, that foreign investors could not change their minds on where to place a very large investment in the Philippines. Headlined: "Our High Court's Folly," *Newsday* (11/14/90) fumed editorially:

The Supreme Court this week added to the cacophony of confusion that has characterized this administration by overruling the Board of Investments (BOI) decision on the Luzon Petrochemical Project.

In a 7-4 decision Wednesday, the high tribunal ruled that the BOI should not have authorized the transfer of the plant's site from Bataan to Batangas on the request of its Taiwanese investors.

In ruling out the plant's transfer, the court said the BOI had "surrendered its power to make a company abide by its initial choice, a choice free from any suspicion of unscrupulous machinations and a choice which is undoubtedly in the best interests of the Filipino people."

Aghast at the loss of a major investment from abroad, *Newsday* approvingly cited a minority opinion:

Justice Carolina Grino-Aquino summed up the arguments against the Supreme Court decision succinctly in her dissenting opinion, saying "the Court may not make the decisions that the executive should have made nor pass the laws that the legislature should have passed."

Regardless of the specifics in the LPC case the high court clearly overstepped its jurisdiction this time around.

Of course, none of this matters to the LPC investors. Most have pulled their stakes and gone to Malaysia, where the climate for foreign business must seem infinitely sunnier.

. . . Monsod offered a weak rebuttal, arguing that the special privileges claimed by the foreign investor were contingent on the government planners' preference for siting a project. This was true, and government planners had a right

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

to insist that only those investments compatible with their plans should enjoy special privileges, but not that the government's choice in locating a project should override the investors' preferences. Tax and other privileges are negotiable when a country is genuinely seeking needed foreign investment rather than demonstrating its nationalism or asserting the authority of its planners.

Nuclear Power, Imelda Marcos, and Recovery of the Marcos Money

As early as November 1990, third-party negotiators had begun between President Aquino and Mrs. Marcos as a part of the government's efforts to recover what it believed had been stolen by ex-President Marcos. There were speculations (Ariel Bocobo in the *Standard*, 10/22/90) that a deal was being worked out by representatives of Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Aquino which, in exchange for permission for the dead President and his very much alive widow to return to the Philippines, hundreds of millions of Marcos plunder might be repatriated. . . Such discussions *were* under way, but were not progressing, allegedly because Mrs. Aquino was holding out for more than Mrs. Marcos was prepared to offer. Moreover, whatever Mrs. Marcos might be willing to repatriate, Mrs. Aquino dreaded Mrs. Marcos' return.

Nap Rama, in his weekly *Panorama* round-up, like Borjal, absolved President Aquino of any command responsibility for misfortunes suffered under her leadership. Rama was nonetheless one of the few journalists not intimidated either by the bugaboos of nuclear power or the discomforts of coming to terms with Imelda Marcos in order to recover a substantial share of Marcos' looted wealth. Thus he has urged that the use of Westinghouse's mothballed nuclear reactor in Bataan be studied to see if its precious contribution to the energy-deficient Philippine economy could be safely availed of. As for Imelda's wealth, he deplored the attitude of those who would not accept a compromise agreement, pointing out that moral posturing could only damage Philippine national interests. Rama pointed to the numerous precedents for compromise in agreements already entered into, noting that these settlements had been reached with persons who admitted they had served as trustees for Marcos money. In the Roberto Benedicto case, which the Senate had upset, Benedicto disputed that certain of his assets were those of Marcos. There was no doubt that this was correct; but it was also true that he had an interest in reducing the fraction attributed to Marcos and increasing his own. Benedicto was however prepared to "buy peace" by offering one half of the impounded Benedicto assets (1.2 billion). Rama pointed out (12/9/90) the puny results so far of the government's search for plundered assets:

The verifiable facts are: after almost five years of Cory Aquino's Executive Order No. 1 creating the PCGG, only trickles of the supposed \$10 billion or over hidden wealth of the late President have been collected; the cronies and the Marcos widow have the money to hire topnotch lawyers now running rings around the PCGG and able to freeze the cases in court forever. This has been clearly demonstrated in the past half decade. The Imelda trial in New York is

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

one shining example.

Had the old PCGG listened to suggestions in 1986-1987 that it enter into amicable settlement and accept the \$5 billion offer instead of aspiring to recover all of the \$10 billion, the country need probably not have gone through the crisis it's in now.

Anyone familiar with the way stolen money is recovered in the Philippines—whether from the police, government officials, cronies, or gangsters—*knows* that it is hopeless to demand the return of the entire sum stolen, confiscated or concealed. In every case, those in a position to do so, take a cut. The spectacle of Senators denying what is common knowledge is, and is received as, moral attitudinizing that *perhaps* translates into votes (though assets recovered and spent on bread and circuses would probably earn more votes). Apart from empty oralizing, such behavior may also be a cover for cooperation with some scheme concocted to hijack the money between release by the holder and receipt by the national treasury.

Government Dithering on Motor Fuel Prices

Two of the worst faults of the Aquino Administration—indecisiveness and arrogance—were prominently displayed in its mishandling of fuel prices. Its officials did not prepare the public for the inevitable rise in prices, though the government was sinking deeper into debt because of its efforts to stave off a further pull in its popularity. It then committed a series of blunders: successive stop/go measures and reversals of policy. As early as November 15, when gas stations were suddenly ordered to limit hours of services, Ople, in the *Bulletin* (11/15/90) had denounced

faceless technocrats who . . . can be dangerous to society unless reined in through political accountability. They disdain explaining themselves to the general public that would have to bear the burden of their draconian and ill-considered decisions.

It was also difficult to avoid the impression of official deceit, although largely unintended. At the highest levels, the government has been assiduously repeating, like a mantra, the assurance that the country's oil supply is adequate. The three oil companies also keep saying this. True, the government warned that if the Middle East crisis worsened we could be driven to gas rationing. But gasoline is definitely being rationed now. Do you still need coupons to make it official?

Then on December 5, without warning, gasoline prices were raised from P8.50-8.87 per liter to P15.00-15.95 and diesel fuel from P6.24 to P9.35, a huge increase. The following day, gasoline prices were further raised to P20.70, but diesel lowered to P7.75, the President explaining that she had been kept in the dark as to the scale of the planned increase or that the price of diesel, the poor man's fuel (used in jeepneys) would be so sharply raised. She also tried to shift blame for the price increase to Congress, which had failed to pass additional tax legislation. Speaker Mitra replied that tax legislation had been delayed to wait for economies it demanded from Malacañang. What had happened at the Palace Cabinet meeting on December fifth was described by Philip Lustria in the Manila

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Times (12/8/90):

. . . Oca Orbos, during a Cabinet meeting Wednesday, assailed the pricing scheme, urging the President to leave the job of explaining to the ERB chief [Fernando]. His fellow Cabinet members were surprised to see the amiable Orbos ranting and fuming mad.

Orbos found allies in Eddie Ramos, Rocky Iletto, Sid Cariño and Ruben Torres, who all found the pricing scheme to be too drastic. Ramos was fuming mad because of Fernando's failure to inform the defense and military establishment of the price hikes. "How could we prepare a contingency plan to meet all the security threats arising from the fuel hikes, when we were not informed?" mused Ramos.

Their reaction obviously influenced the President to drop Fernando like a hot potato. That's why the President, speaking over radio and television, humiliated him publicly by asking for a price rollback of the commonly used fuel. Moreover, she claimed she did not have a hand in the ERB's decision.

Pettiness at the Palace

In a move which was bound to shrink still further her declining approval rating as President, Mrs. Aquino again refused to issue passports to "Danding" Cojuangco's family to visit their father and husband at Christmas time, insisting they use documents limiting their travel to one trip to the Philippines. The family head predictably insisted on unlimited passports, a constitutional right of all Philippine citizens. The President had been rebuked twice in the lower and Appeals courts, but she was at first determined to raise the issue to the Supreme Court, where she would certainly again lose.

This pettiness is a political burden to Mrs. Aquino. Among a sentimental people like the Filipinos, keeping apart a family at Christmas time cannot be justified by political considerations. The obvious folly of such a step led some observers to accept it as the first unequivocal sign that Mrs. Aquino did not intend to be a candidate for re-election in 1992.

. . . In mid-December, she finally yielded to the courts and the pressure of public opinion, authorizing the issuance of unrestricted passports to the Cojuangco family—after Cojuangco supporters had effectively exploited the issue to her disadvantage.

The "Christmas Massacre". A Question of Survival

As Christmas 1990 approached, President Aquino was struggling to survive until the election scheduled for 1992. She needed new faces to help her foundering ship of state afloat. Despite increasingly strident calls for an early election or her resignation, no one believed that either alternative was a possibility. Still, the anvil chorus succeeded in weakening her still further. It was obvious that Mrs. Aquino would again have to throw overboard a few of her most vulnerable associates in order to avoid calamity. It was in fact quite astonishing that she was managing once again to avoid the principle of command responsibility, blaming

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

others for inadequate performance—sacrificing those on whom she had relied not only for support but defense—transparently diverting criticism from her person and the presidential office to her Cabinet and the Congress, despite the frantic outpouring of the public relations machines of both institutions. The president's halo was long gone, but as long as there were bodies to be disposed of, she probably thought herself safe. She had few reliable supporters any longer than non-electables who owed their jobs in Cabinet and Congress exclusively to her patronage and the remaining elements of the coalition that had placed her in office—the Human Righters and the Americans. With so much face involved, the Americans could hardly abandon her, even if they doubted that she really wanted to assist them to retain their military bases. A point might even be reached when the U.S. would realize it might face an embarrassing choice between *either* the bases *or* Mrs. Aquino. If the anvil chorus of censure and complaints had accomplished nothing else, Mrs. Aquino was being eliminated as a viable candidate to succeed herself in 1992.

From the beginning, Cory has been an uncounscious puppet wearing a halo created by a T.V. spectacular, and her successive handlers have been cashiered and defanged with American encouragement. She was brought to power by a coalition which had nothing in common but a determination to force Marcos from office, and she has subsequently fed off the bodies of her original champions. First Enrile, backed by important military elements, was forced to walk the plank, then vice President Laurel was humiliated by being deprived of all positions of authority. The Locsin-Arroyo tandem then rode high for two years on the strength of their talents of image-making and backstage intrigue, but they were then jettisoned in favor of crony businessmen headed by Concepcion and supported by the Church, both major players from the beginning but now it looked as if Joe Con's days were numbered. All that remained of the original coalition were the Human Righters, who had given up street marching for public office and there failed. Only Cardinal Sin had not been politically excommunicated by the saint he had sanctified. What *she* personally had left were the powerful sinews of government money and officeholders, directed by her brother Peping as drillmaster, backed by the massive powers of a Philippine President with its bully pulpit of the Presidential office. Having lost support in all domestic sectors, she had, to be sure, the improbable option of xenophobia, using Solita Monsod and Senator Estrada to lead a demagogic, suicidal battle against the IMF and the United States bases. Secretary of Health Alran Bengzon, vice Chairman of the Filipino bases negotiating team, was available to deploy the shock troops.

Economic Problems as Viewed by an Expert

There are a few Filipino, particularly the CRC economists headed by Bernardo Villegas, who regularly report the economic news in an upbeat fashion which their colleagues find inexplicable. One critic, who seems unmotivated by spite or

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

previous association with the Marcos regime, is Rodolfo Romero of the *Manila Bulletin*. On December 27, he compared the Marcos reaction to the IMF prescriptions of 1970 to those of the Aquino government in 1990, unfavorably to the latter. In 1970,

there was a pervasive feeling that the government of the day, now provided with several tools of economic reform, had the capability to turn things around fairly quickly. Moreover, the nation had a strong export trade in primary products, a state of affairs accounted for largely by the continued operation of the Laurel-Langley Agreement. Furthermore, monetary and fiscal policymaking was not hamstrung by a crushing burden of domestic and external debt. Thus, the business community, and the people at large, were filled with hope and optimism for the days that lay ahead.

Romero contrasted the current picture, sparing no elements of the regime:

Today, except for small pockets of incurable optimism, the general mood seems to me to be one of pessimism, frustration and cynicism. It is born not out of a feeling that this country is not possesses of what it would take to turn the economy around . . . [but] of a feeling of virtually total disenchantment with the entire governmental structure—the indecisive and inept Executive Departments, the obstructionist and hopelessly politics-oriented legislature and the slow-moving and corrupt judiciary.

Thus the critic conceded that the heavy burden of external and internal debt inherited by the administration contributed to the paralysis of government, but insisted that the debt burden did not absolve government from its numerous errors.

Cory Battles the *Malas* Syndrome

Mrs. Aquino's resort to her Human Rights enthusiasts, the *Kabisig* (Linked Arms) movement, having failed to arrest her decline in popularity, and her fumbling stop-and-go decisions on the price of motor fuels having further embittered the poor and lower middle class, the Aquino government was grasping at straws as the year ended. Her supporters hoped that the installation of a new Whiz Kid in her Cabinet might somehow arrest the deadly spread of the feeling, among a superstitious people, that she had become *malas*, or a figure afflicted with bad luck, which she transmitted to her people. (A similar perception of Marcos had been a major factor in hastening his collapse.) Then, when at the bottom of her decline in public approval, it was trumpeted that important oil strike had been made in Palawan, it seemed to some that her drumbeaters had prestidigitated an illusion designed to appeal to the Filipino predilection to believe in strokes of good fortune,—and hence to arrest any inclination to see their leader as *malas*. Sophisticates were not only suspicious of the timing of the announcement, but also of its authenticity, as such reports are usually made for the benefit of stockmarket riggers who are accustomed to live well off short-term major changes in the prices of volatile Philippine oil shares. After a day or two, it was admitted that none of the oil in the ground (Palawan has long been regarded as a geologically likely source of oil) could contribute to the Philippine economy until well into the term of whoever follows Cory as

President.

Nap Rama, who is an able correspondent when not playing drum-beater, in his year-end survey of 1990, acknowledged that 1990 has now been a black year for the Philippines, but blamed the December 1, 1989 *putsch* and natural disasters for the faltering economy, and the Congress for much of the fumbling of economic as well as political problems (*Panorama*, 12/30/90):

The collection of calamities inevitably fanned the superstition that Cory is a *malas* President and the country would be better off if it's rid of her. Now this kind of destabilizing talk is deadly since there's no reasoned argument against it. It's difficult to refute a theory based on superstition because it rests on unreason.

The bad-luck superstition was gaining wide currency until the drillers in Palawan mercifully hit a major oil deposit. This broke the voodoo spell.

In the Cabinet revamp, the embattled Joe Concepcion, Secretary of Trade and Industry (to whom Cory was deeply obligated for his services at Namfrel during the Snap Election), who had probably not stolen anything, but had made a mockery of official prohibitions on conflicts of interest, was eased out by a not-guilty finding of a Senate investigating committee, many of whom were equally indebted to him for favors, while his twin brother Raul was recklessly boasting of the incredible successes of the Concepcion businesses. He failed to acknowledge that there might have been a connection between those dazzling successes and the fact of his twin's incumbency at the DTI (Like "Jobo" Fernandez' bank, the Far East Bank and Trust Co. when he was Central Bank Governor under both Marcos and Aquino.) On the specious grounds that the Department of Tourism had once been a part of the DTI Tourism chief Garrucho was named as Concepcion's successor. "Ping" de Jesus, who had long shed his image as a Marcos-appointee by virtue of superior stroking of the Presidential ego, was named as replacement for the unlucky Estuar, whose buildings and bridges had been devastated by earthquakes. The star of the new Cabinet, however, was Oscar Orbos, former Congressman, whose energy and attention to public relations had led journalists, particularly after an endorsement by Cardinal Sin as presidential timber, to speculate that Mrs. Aquino was grooming him as her successor—a suspicion that would make him a marked man for other Presidential candidates, particularly Mitra, his former colleague, with whom he was bound to butt heads in the course of his announced and much-needed reorganization in the government's bloated bureaucracy. Orbos would of course be caught between the IMF's demand for greater government austerity and the Congressional sponsors of the incumbents of jobs to be abolished. If Orbos can sail that shark-infested sea without capsizing, he will indeed qualify as a can-do presidential candidate. Commentators pointed out that his left only Alran Bengzon, the super-nationalist Secretary of Health as an original member of the Cabinet, along with Mita Pardo de Tavera at the Social Welfare Department, but it was intimated that the latter's ministry might be abolished by absorption into the Department of Health.

The IMF's demands for greater government economy had been staved off to

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

provide everyone, particularly government employees, with a good Christmas, but the Minister of Finance was telling everyone that big foreign loans were coming in January 1991. He avoided calling attention to the fine print, which spelled out the IMF conditionalities, few of which had been fully met under previous commitments, and the economic indicators showed that the administration was continuing to spend itself into bankruptcy. If the government in fact adheres to IMF conditionalities, it will undoubtedly be at the cost of serious public disorders. A small voice in the *Manila Times* (12/30/90), Luis Teodoro, wrote:

Whether there will be further gas-price increases or not, however, the fact is that the increases of December 5 and thereafter are enough to fuel continuing instability over the next six months. Given the assumption that the Aquino government will not yield to popular pressure, the prospects not only for further disorder but also for increasingly tighter control over dissent via police and military action appear irreversible.

Mrs. Aquino and the Orbos Gambit

In the face of her steady decline in public support, based chiefly on popular perceptions of irresolution and a lack of purpose, Mrs. Aquino hoped she had found a way of evading responsibility for public discontent by selecting a new champion as Executive Secretary. Orbos had a talent for handling the media, which assured him of a honeymoon until his actions began to influence various pressure groups unfavorably. More important, Orbos had brought the first healing balm to the President's wounded ego in over two years. When he provided free telephone service in Malacañang to families who had relatives working in the Middle East, he not only did something received with enthusiasm by the beneficiaries. Their physical presence in Malacañang, and their gratitude, expressed personally to the President, bathed her in that warm glow of appreciation with which she had begun her presidency. Nap Rama (*Panorama*, 2/3/91) thoughtfully warned, however, that the idea of bringing the government to the people, though the right project, was based on the wrong premise:

Free telephone calls, free snacks and physical contact with the President or her Executive Secretary was not the constitutionalists' translation of "bringing the government to the people." Dole-outs are among the worst policies the government could adopt. It subverts the virtue needed for national progress—self-reliance. Government dole-outs make the people dependent, unresourceful and lazy.

Blas Ople (*Bulletin*, 1/29/91) commented on another aspect of Orbos' ascendancy. It had encouraged the incorrigible politicking (author's, not Ople's phrase) of Cardinal Sin in presidential politics:

with a few words Cardinal Sin has legitimized Oscar Orbos of Pangasinan as a serious Presidential contender. Some say he has at the same time delegitimized Miriam Santiago by pointing out that you could not have two women consecutively serving as President. A woman journalist, Sol Vanzi, said this merely revealed the Cardinal's propensity to be "sexist".

Ople warned that it was early days to predict Orbos' future:

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

The record on which to judge the performance of Orbos might be too slight and tenuous so far, consisting of a few bills to stimulate small business in the countryside when he was a congressman and some dramatic but short-lived achievements in transportation when he was Secretary of that department. But as Executive Secretary he has infused the Office of the President with a new dynamism and given it a populist image.

Discussing the President's power to name her successor, Ople commented:

Her endorsement will carry less weight than in previous elections—and can be a “kiss of death” according to the opposition—but it can also mean instant access to power and patronage, including resources needed to win elections.

People who believe that most of the current political instability is a legacy of Marcos-Aquino politics, with its unending cycle of political vengeance, will probably welcome a new face not burdened with the historical baggage of the past. But if this is the gauge, only real newcomers, such as Orbos and Santiago, can qualify.

The columnist then turned to the Church's recent history and future:

The Catholic Church itself will dismiss outright any insinuations that it is involved in partisan politics, that it is violating the separation of Church and State under the Constitution. But formalities aside, the Church indeed played a highly instrumental role in the events that resulted in the change of government in 1986.

It is doubtful that the Church intends to vacate the field, after it has tasted the heady wine of political power. It was the political party *de facto* of Cory Aquino. It will have to have a hand in the choice of her successor, not the Church *per se* but its vast network of volunteer organizations.

... Of course, Ople is not a pillar of the Church. Tatad is, though often an antagonist of the Cardinal. In *Newsday* (1/30/90), he summarized the likely effects of the Cardinal's blessing: “Simply because the Cardinal has pronounced him a likely contender, those who do not support his prospects will make sure this anointing destroys him.” As Ople had predicted, Orbos was now about to face “the night of the long knives” in his own (the President's) camp.

Early Reactions to the Gulf War

The first reaction to hostilities in the Persian Gulf was panic buying. The shelves of the supermarkets were swept clean by those with the money to lay up supplies, but the one-sided progress of the war and government appeals to stay calm cooled off panic buying after a week or so. On the other hand, the concern for the welfare of the overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East was probably greater than that experienced by any other single country. There were upwards of 600,000 Filipinos involved, many of whom were in Iraq, Kuwait and the Arab Emirates, all of which were in the combat zone.

There was much confusion as the problem changed its character from mass to selective evacuation. Many of the Philippine Ambassadors were not at their posts, and recriminations were exchanged between the workers and their diplomatic representatives which produced heavy and often unfair media denunciation, but a relatively small fraction of the workers in the end wanted evacua-

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

tion. Most preferred to keep their jobs and run the risks, since few could count on equally attractive (perhaps *any*) employment at home.

As usual, the public strongly backed the Americans. A few politicians, some expressing genuine sympathy, and others out of a calculation that measures helpful to the United States would bring concrete benefits, made supportive statements. A few even advocated sending military units to the Gulf as a symbol of support to the U.S. and the U.N. More sophisticated elements cautioned against offering anything but moral support, pointing out that a large Muslim population in the Philippines would oppose attacks on fellow-Muslims. Some intellectuals were bitterly opposed to the U.S. action, either out of pacifistic convictions or because of sympathy for the Palestinians, whose cause Saddam championed. Israel's restraint in the face of Iraqi Scud attacks defused any potential anti-Israel resentment. An Iraqi terrorist attack on the U.S. Information Service's library in Makati misfired when the terrorist blew himself up rather than the targeted building, and led to the expulsion of one of the Iraqi diplomatic officials allegedly involved. Security at the American Embassy and the U.S. bases was drastically tightened.

Some of numerically weak Socialist and more numerous Left-leaning Catholics were very hostile to the American attack in the Gulf. They strongly favored waiting until the economic embargo should bring Saddam to heel, and suffered more for the Iraqi civilians than for the Kuwaitis who had been brutalized. In the end, they found themselves repeating Saddam's propaganda that civilians were the chief victims of the merciless, unopposed Allied bombardment of military installations and were resentful that it was meeting so little effective resistance. They deplored the technical superiority of the allies and berated their reluctance to shed blood in land warfare. Tatad, the Christian Socialist, was the most extreme. As editor of *Newsday*, he combined his concern for the environment ("save the birds") with a moral condemnation of the bombing (2/11/91):

In this act of rescuing helpless birds from certain death, one sees the best of humanity at work. It makes you feel good to be a man. It reminds you of Mother Teresa's "doing something beautiful for God." But precisely because it makes you feel good to see so many concerned human beings doing something beautiful for birds caught in the grime of war, you begin to wonder why there are not enough noble souls doing as much for the men, women and children killed or wounded or simply displaced by the relentless allied bombing of Baghdad and Basra and other parts of Iraq.

Why is there no universal outcry, no official expedition of concerned humanitarians, aside from former US attorney general Ramsey Clark, to the blasted hovels of these victims? Have birds and shrimps and crabs and turtles and sea cows and dolphins and sharks become more important than humans?

Tatad had no apologies for endorsing Saddam's complaints. Anything was better than bombing Iraq. Let the Americans shed their blood, not those of the Iraqis:

In an apparent effort to convince the world that the US has noble plans for Iraq, Washington has let it be known that it has begun looking at plans on

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

how to rebuild Iraq. But while Washington talks of rebuilding Iraq, Operation Desert Storm routinely deposits the equivalent of several Hiroshima bombs on its territory. This, to me, is the height of cynicism.

Another Unpresidential Act by the President

Mrs. Aquino's closest supporters took pride in her being stubborn, but on February 10, stubborn presidential insistence on pressing her suit for libel against Luis Beltran, a columnist of the *Standard*, made her look ridiculous, offsetting whatever gains she had made by the Orbos-engineered stunt of dispensing free telephone calls at Malacañang for the families of Filipinos employed in the Persian Gulf countries. Very few could understand why she was so insistent in demanding satisfaction for what everyone but herself considered a careless but unmalicious columnist's figure of speech. Granted that it may have been in bad taste, no politician, high or low, with the exception of Mrs. Aquino herself, would have taken notice of the expression "hiding under her bed" as anything but clumsy shorthand for being frightened by the August RAM-led revolt. Mrs. Aquino takes pride in her courage, and no one doubts it. To make a public issue of it may or may not strengthen public belief in that quality, but to try to prove it in a court of law made her look unpresidential. As a demonstration of *machismo*, it added little as a testimonial to her courage, though perhaps, by her militancy, to a symbolic demonstration of authority, of being "in charge". Even her faithful Knight-errant, Senator Saguisag, was embarrassed. In his Manila *Times* column (2/14/91), he squirmed: "The President can be so stubborn. if engagingly. Anyway *kaya naging Pangulo 'yan, talagang matigas ang ulo. Sumulong kasi, walang urong-urong.* (That's why she became President, she's really stubborn. She always attacks, never retreats.) He added:

At the risk of ear-bending verbigeration, may I again say how much I respect her instincts when she decides to be appropriately stubborn.

It was not wrong that the libel case was filed. I am not so sure, however, about pressing it. In litigational attrition, as in chess, the value of every piece or objective changes with every move.

Perhaps I belong to the small minority who did not see the trial on TV last Monday. . .

After lunch the first comment I got on the trial was from a MABINI . . . colleague [human rights lawyer] and a long-time and valued friend. He said that the old spark seemed gone from Dean Tony Coronel. A number said President Cory should have stayed in bed (not hide under it) last Monday.

I have since heard and read various conflicting accounts. I get the impression not all of them saw the same right, who was wrong and why—were not at all clear.

I suggest the Judge simply award President Cory one peso to vindicate a principle and send everybody home

This was the best a passionate defender of the President could do in her defense. Her most unforgiving critic, Kit Tatad, denounced her mercilessly in *Newsday* (2/13/91):

The decision to televise Monday's broadcast proceedings at the Manila

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Regional Trial Court nationwide was, to begin with, a stupid mistake. But President Aquino's decision to take the witness stand, where she bumbled on intense grilling by the defense, was an even more stupid mistake. . .

Her handlers must have thought her court appearance would give her some badly needed propaganda mileage. That could explain the live television coverage. That, to repeat, was a stupid mistake. Nationwide coverage she got, but it showed her, not libel now, in her nakedness. It was a humbling experience. . .

The quiet rage in the witness' eyes, the way she bit her lips, and the ironic manner in which he punctuated her every sentence with "sir"—in reference to the defense counsel, upon instruction of the court—left no doubt that she was not going to forget this ordeal for maybe as long as she lived. It was a lonely devastated figure of a president, the loneliest and most devastated we ever saw, that sat and climbed out of the witness box.

Rama, on the other hand, sprang to Mrs. Aquino's defense, berating the judge who he claimed had treated the President unpresidentially. In Rama's view, the President, however unpresidential her behavior, was entitled to respect not only as President of the Philippines, but as a world heroine.

. . . It was yet another example of pettiness at the Palace, confirming the charges of her political opponents as well as the taunts of the male chauvinists that this was what one could expect from a woman President.

A Bravura Performance by Foreign Secretary Manglapus

It is no secret that Raul Manglapus, the Foreign Minister of the Philippines, is filled with past *ressentiments* against the United States and probably bristled at the aggressive bargaining of U.S. envoy Richard Armitage in negotiating on the future of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines. Still, in early February, before the Rotary Club of Manila, he recklessly overstepped the bounds of diplomatic protocol when he accused the United States of deliberately "playing constable" in the world, and President Bush of expanding the American war goals in the Persian Gulf beyond those authorized by the United Nations. A high Filipino government official had finally done something that even Ambassador Platt had to reject. He walked out and later issued a critical statement. As the personal representative of President Bush, he could do no less and keep his job, but he generously neglected to call attention to the most relevant U.S. example of "playing constable" in the Philippines—sending in the Phantoms to preserve the Aquino government in December 1990.

The most level-headed commentator in the Philippines, Blas Ople, wrote in the *Bulletin* (2/5/91) endorsing the Ambassador's view that Manglapus' remarks were "uncalled for . . . inaccurate and offensive".

The Ambassador thought Manglapus had placed the President of the United States in ridicule by quoting from his speech before the joint session of the US Congress in a flippant manner, specifically his words on why the US must from time to time step forward . . . "and accept our responsibility to lead the world away from the dark chaos of dictatorship."

Even in defending his own President, the Ambassador was determined to

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

protect Mrs. Aquino from any backlash of American opinion:

He detected a difference between the attitudes of Manglapus and of President Aquino towards the Gulf war. Manglapus must have aggravated the US concern by pointing out that what President Aquino specifically supported was not the US commitment *per se* but President Bush's delimitation of his war aims to liberate Kuwait and spare Iraq from destruction.

While Ople had labeled Manglapus' outline of Philippine foreign policy as "hyperbolic", he offered some defense of the foreign minister's language:

A close reading of Manglapus' speech shows he did not treat of the US role in the Gulf with levity, but certainly with condescension. Whether this was a just war Manglapus left open as a disputable presumption. This must have touched a raw nerve in Platt, a man who has not raised his voice in anger since he assumed his post in Manila three and half years ago.

The Foreign Minister's references to President Bush and Ambassador Platt's reactions of course crowded out references to Manglapus' lengthy exposition of Philippine foreign policy, which deserved greater attention. Less a policy statement than a debater's brief, Manglapus told listeners more about himself than the Philippines. In the Manglapus world, the Philippines was the "strategic center of the planet." It owed no one anything, least of all the Americans, who had enjoyed the services of millions of its citizens, most of whom had been educated in the Philippines and now constituted the sinews of foreign economies and societies. It apparently escaped Manglapus' attention that in praising the qualities and accomplishments of its citizens abroad, he was exposing the inability of his own country's economy and society to utilize them effectively:

Is it then our policy to perpetuate this condition, to institutionalize this Philippine position of chief supplier of skills, dispenser to the world of foreign aid, cerebral, muscular and ultimately financial? No, this is not our policy. But it is our intention to foster this practice for as long as it conforms to our vision of our own internal development. . .

There is a special reason why this activity fits the character of our development. Our superior capability to supply the world with professional and technical skills serves to confirm our claim, not seriously disputed by anyone, that only three decades ago we were already the second most developed economy in Asia.

In somehow losing that leading position, we lost the capacity to absorb our own skills. But our surplus of those skills we are now turning to foreign exchange producers. And above all, that surplus now enables us to reverse the psychology of our diplomacy.

... The key word here is "somehow". The speaker was careful to avoid explanation of *how* the Philippines had lost its position in the Fifties as "the second most developed economy in Asia", but the world knows all too well that whereas other Asian countries invited foreign investment and limited corruption to tolerable levels, thus building flourishing economies, the Philippines, a hostage to corruption, was obliged instead to export its people. Because of that exchange, the Foreign Minister claimed that the world was in debt to the Philippines, the country that had failed its citizens, rather than to its expatriates.

Manglapus then apostrophized his audience, calling on them to be proud of the accomplishments of Filipinos world-wide, which if it had not professed

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

ignorance of his nation's failings, would have been a noble message:

Now we need no longer approach the table of diplomatic dialogue in the onerous category of recipients, aid seekers or beggars. We are givers to the world and we expect the world to take notice. We are grateful to all nations that trade with us, render us financial assistance, provide jobs for our people by investing in profitable ventures here or by accepting them in their own lands. We provide them in exchange with the trained skills without which they could not prosper.

Another unique concept Manglapus introduced into his analysis of international relations was that use of the territory or facilities utilized by the Americans in the Philippines should cost the American what the Filipinos claim they could earn if those assets were not used for their present purposes. This is a reckless assertion in the face of the Filipinos' total failure to employ profitably base facilities heretofore returned to the Philippines.

The Foreign Secretary bewailed what he called the unwillingness of the Philippine media to back its negotiators even after he had achieved the feat of bringing the base negotiating back to Manila rather than Washington. It would however be news to the American negotiators to learn that the Philippine media had supported the Americans rather than the Filipinos!

Raul Manglapus is an embittered man, who believes himself entitled to far greater eminence. In his own view, he is so much more intelligent, learned, cultivated and virtuous not only than his competitors at home but his competitors or antagonists abroad. A megalomaniac is a weak reed on which a weak President and a weak country are obliged to lean.

Base Negotiations Turn Sour

At this low point in presidential prestige, Ambassador Platt called upon Mrs. Aquino to rein in her bucking bronco, the Foreign Minister. The Ambassador had finally been driven by the posturing of Secretary Manglapus to register an objection. The Americans seemed desperately eager to conclude the negotiations so that the IMF program could proceed, but protested both Manglapus' *obiter dicta* and his panel's casual behavior (Manila Times, 1/19/91):

The US panel, . . . was miffed by the conduct of Philippine negotiators, prompting Executive Secretary Oscar Orbos to meet with a senior US embassy official on Tuesday . . . [who] told Orbos that American negotiators wanted "no more lecturing" from Philippine panel chairman Raul Manglapus on his "view of the world". . .

Other sources said the Americans were also aghast at what they considered the "cavalier" attitude of the Philippine panel toward the talks.

The Manglapus team, they said, was wasting the time of the US panel when it sought to cut short the main sessions today and tomorrow to allow Manglapus to attend the Philippine Military Academy graduation ceremonies in Baguio. . .

The American sentiment is that the conduct of Philippine negotiators hardly demonstrates any earnest interest to get the talks moving.

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

The US, the sources said, is hoping that President Aquino will personally intervene "because that's the only hope left."

While Ople was warning that even a successful conclusion to the negotiations could be blocked by nine Senators, (2/3 of 23), a spillover of resentment from anti-base nationalists into hostility toward American aims in the Gulf War could be heard. The attitude of those who were determined to "say goodbye to Uncle Sam" was expressed in doggerel composed by another *Times* columnist, reviewing a song cassette produced locally that joyously tolled the death knell:

Whether bold, neoethnic or rock, the songs have one clear message: American domination has only divided and impoverished us, the bases and their stockpile of nuclear weapons must go.

The question is not if but when—when will these accursed bases go? Because of present realities (in the words of *Buklod*: "... hanggang bihag/Ng Washington ang Malacañang/Manatili ang mga base/Sa ating bayan" ["Until Washington and Malacañang are separated, the bases will remain in our country"]) we may have to wait for some time.

But we have waited for decades; we can wait for a few more years. And then sooner or later (make it sooner), goodbye to Uncle Sam and his bases and his hitech weapons, which even now are unleashing destruction upon Iraq and "liberating" Kuwait in the same way Manila was liberated from the Japanese in 1945.

One Unapplauded Accomplishment of the Aquino Government

Since the failure of President Aquino's campaign for the Nobel Prize, the voices of the Women's Liberation Movement have been little heard. Overly-rhapsodic at the time of her Inauguration, they have been uncharacteristically silent since, hardly rising to the defense of their sex when Cardinal Sin said that it would be appropriate for Cory to be followed by a male in 1992. (Always available for a quotable comment, the Cardinal said of the embattled President, "Poor Cory, she did her best!") Undoubtedly, the feminists' idol of 1986 was shopworn in 1991.

What has been overlooked is that in the exercise of her appointive powers, Cory's women selectees have proved far superior to her appointed males. At the Cabinet and sub-cabinet level they have included Leticia Shahani as Under-secretary of Foreign Affairs (before she became Senator), as well as Attorney Miriam Santiago and Solita Monsod, both exceptionally talented women. Santiago administered the heretofore graft-ridden Commission on Immigration clearly and with great competence, and was prepared to do likewise with the controversial Department of Agrarian Reform when rejected by the Committee on Appointments. Economist Solita Monsod presided competently at the National Economic Development Administration for several years until she self-destructed by disagreeing violently with the Philippine policy of fidelity to the IMF conditionalities. The reticent Mita Pardo de Tavera has quietly discharged the duties of her post as Minister of Social Welfare with little criticism, and she is one of the two survivors of Aquino's original cabinet. Attorney Haydee Yorac, an aggressive lawyer, served competently for thirteen months as the Acting head

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

of the powerful Commission on Elections, as have Rosario Lopez, head of the Securities Exchange Commission, Andrea Domingo, Santiago's successor at the CID, and Patricia Santo Domingo, chief of the Civil Service. In addition, there are Josephine Lichauco, Undersecretary of the DOTC and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Undersecretary at the Department of Commerce. There are undoubtedly others, but even this selective listing should be reason for rejoicing in the Feminist camp.

The contrast between these ladies and their male counterparts is so striking as to be embarrassing to the men. It can probably be more easily explained by a digression into sociology, which the focus of this manuscript precludes. Suffice it to say that it is a matter of common knowledge that boys in the Philippine culture are a spoiled lot.

Cabinet Ministers Azcuña and Jayme Resign

A Supreme Court decision reached in late February upholding the Constitutional prohibition against the holding of multiple government positions forced Presidential Assistant Vicente Jayme and Presidential Spokesman Adolfo Azcuña to resign in order to continue to receive their high-paid salaries as officers of government corporations. Cabinet positions pay only P17,000 monthly, whereas Jayme's position of alternate director of the Asian Development Bank, and Azcuña's directorship at the Development Bank of the Philippines and the San Miguel Corporation are richly compensated. Their decisions simply corrected an anomaly that made it possible to recruit for government service persons capable of demanding high-salaried private sector positions. The extent of this evasion of a constitutional prohibition had been pointed out by Jarius Bondoc of the *Globe* (2/26/91), who revealed that the government paid the holders of Cabinet posts, in remuneration of their other positions, a total of just under P8 million in 1989. Sharing this largesse were Science Secretary Ceferino Follosco, P830,790; Local Government Secretary Luis Santos, P600,633; Press Undersecretary Noel Tolentino P592,000; Finance Secretary Jesus Estanislao, P382,780; and Budget Secretary Guillermo Carague, P341,785, the highest beneficiaries.

Senator Saguisag, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ethics, defended the necessity for these supplemental compensations on the ground that without them, the government would be unable to recruit top-calibre men in government . . . True, but as the lawyer Saguisag would object if his client were on trial, his statement assumes a fact not in evidence. The larger number of those drawing these handsome emoluments are not, as were Azcuña and Jayme, persons of such quality and attainments that high-paying jobs were available to them outside of government.

Would Chattichai's Fall Have A Demonstration Effect?

The successful Thai military coup against Prime Minister Chattichai's civilian

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

government called forth comment in the Philippines, whose government has been accused of the same crimes—corruption and incompetence—as its counterpart in Thailand. Considering, and generally rejecting, the possibility that it might encourage Mrs. Aquino's military critics to stage another coup, Luis Teodoro in the *Manila Times* (2/28/91), observed that

President Corazon Aquino was apparently concerned enough over the possible demonstration effect of the successful military coup in Thailand to issue a statement on it.

Inspired by their Thai bretheren's success and perhaps just a little bit envious of it, the remnant forces of Gringo Honasan just might take it upon themselves to once again try to capture power.

He judged the Filipino mutineers' prospects to be less favorable than the Thai:

. . . our long history of having to constantly confront political issues—as evidenced by, among others, our 200-year tradition of rebellion against our colonizers—has developed in Filipinos a level of confidence in the making of political choices not as pronounced in other Southeast Asians.

Fifth Anniversary of People Power Revolution a Bust

There were few voices raised in support of the President's person or record on February 26, 1991, five years after her triumph. In fact, the *antis* dominated the streets, as described by Danilo Mariano in the *Manila Times* (3/2/91) as follows:

. . . the alternative EDSA march was significant also because it did not consist of government employees and students who were bused to the EDSA-Ortigas junction last Monday. The only civil servants and students who joined Wednesday's protest did so on their own steam. No "*hakot*" (bused participants) beefed up their ranks, unlike the government and Church-sponsored assembly two days before.

At its final stopover in Cubao, the protesters' ranks were estimated to have swelled to between 80,000 and 120,000, definitely more numerous than the crowd of mostly bored onlookers who went in front of the shrine of the so-called Queen of Peace beside Robinson's Galleria to endure yet another tedious address by an uninspired—and uninspiring—President Aquino.

The critic analyzed the composition of the anti-Aquino parade:

There were, of course, the usual student and trade-union militants and other protest fixtures, often described as left-leaning by their detractors (as if to be left-leaning were itself a crime).

But also in attendance were the embittered former supporters of Mrs. Aquino, many of whom were the ones who actually mobilized the masses that surrounded Camps Aguinaldo and Crame in 1986 and assured the success of the so-called EDSA Revolution. These middle-class professionals who risked their careers and lives to topple a hated strongman have now come to realize the bankruptcy of the "purely anti-Marcos line" of the old struggle.

Mariano distinguished another element in the demonstration, the Marcosites:

. . . With Marcos gone to meet his Maker and no sufficiently charismatic political heir to take over from their late leader, these former loyalists have apparently become willing to make common cause with other movements seeking to remove Mrs. Aquino from the presidency.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Mrs. Aquino's arch-enemy, Kit Tatad, exulted in *Newsday* (3/1/91):

The mammoth march on Wednesday of the President's former cause-oriented allies asking for her resignation, just a few days after she had celebrated the fifth anniversary of her accession to power, signals worse times for Mrs. Aquino . . . although her resignation has been demanded by various groups on various occasions, this was the first time it was sought by groups that had marched with her, and for her, before she became president.

The Feud Between the PNP and the NBI

Incomparably the most stability-threatening element in President Aquino's administration, by the Spring of 1991, was the smouldering enmity between the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation. This had come to a head in the drug bust shoot-out, in which NBI agents had salvaged two officers from the Philippine Constabulary (since absorbed by the PNP). In terms of its threat to the Aquino government, the dissatisfaction felt by the members of the old PC, already at fever point because of their demotion by absorption, was raised to explosive levels by the fact that the officers commanded by General Lim, a police general, should have been their executioners. That the PC numbered scoundrels in its ranks and that there were drug dealers involved in the shootout was not seriously disputed, but that the wipeout should be at the hands of Mrs. Aquino's favorite General gave the event a political coloration that could promote disaffection and even motivate another *coup* attempt.

A strong partisan of Mrs. Aquino (and a declared enemy of the military), Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, wrote in the *Inquirer* (3/6/91) of General Biazon, the new Chief of Staff:

Biazon can't keep the military out from what is certainly a military problem. The Jaylo list on alleged drug lords includes military brass in active service and PNP officials who are retired military officers. The PNP so far is "civilian in character" only on paper.

Twenty generals led by the PNP Director General Cesar P. Nazareno went to Malacañang to present the President with a manifesto, to choose between them and the NBI chief, the retired police Gen. Alfredo Lim. . .

This is conduct unbecoming officers and gentlemen. This is conduct indicating that the military's sense of dominance over the civilian government never left home. And the generals don't care who knows it, including the President. . .

Another Aquino supporter, Noy Novela, weekly chronicler of events in *Mr. and Ms.* (3/19/91) referred to the Jaylo accusations:

National Security adviser Rafael Ileto recommended to President Cory the formation of a presidential committee to conduct an investigation of the charges of former Manila Police Capt. Reynaldo Jaylo that several high ranking PNP officers were connected or involved in illicit-drug traffic. Jaylo was ready and about to divulge the identities of the officers but the Senate investigating committee headed by Sen. Ernesto Herrera postponed the hearing. Before Jaylo could name names to a curious nation, top PNP officials released the names of the officers who supposedly are on Jaylo's list. Figuring prominently

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

were the names of Lt. Gen. Ramon Montano, former PC/INP Chief; Maj. Gen. Cesar Nazareno, PNP Director General; Brig. Gen. Virgilio David, former Chief of the Narcotics Command; Brig. Gen. Pantaleon Dumlao, Jr., former chief of the CIS; and Brig. Gen. Marino Filart, CAPCOM commander. . . The nation now awaits what President Cory would do.

March 1990 Update on the Base Negotiations

While both sides sought to digest the lessons of the Gulf War and their implications for the future of the American-leased bases in the Philippines, Filipino oppositors continued to lose ground. Mel Aquino, foreign affairs specialist in the *Bulletin* (3/3/90) warned the Philippine negotiators that talking tough might prove counter-productive:

With Philippine negotiators talking in a bellicose manner about their proposals, claims, and demands, it is extremely difficult to bring about a meeting of the minds vis-a-vis the two negotiating panels.

Melchor reported disturbing indications that the American Congress was annoyed at the Filipino's negotiating tactics:

A cabinet secretary told a visiting US senator that official calls for US withdrawal are "just negotiating gambits". The visitor, who has tremendous clout on Capitol Hill, said that the American reading public do not look at press reports on cries for "Yankee departure" as mere diplomatic tactics.

Competent authorities of US foreign policy have expressed the view that the Philippines has unwittingly played into the hands of US politicians, press lords, and powerful interests that have long sought a reason to bow out of the Philippines "gracefully".

In *Panorama* (3/10/91), Nap Rama admonished Filipino Senators that they had better find an alternative to "what we lose in rejecting the treaty," while the American scholar Dr. Charles Buss, who was prepared to give up the bases, in an article in the *Philippines Free Press* (3/16/91) insisted that

if the bases are for mutual security, the Filipinos should pay their share of the burden. We cannot accept the Philippine contention that they are for American security only since that could reduce our own forces to the status of mercenaries.

Another Homicide Along Fraternity Row

Hazing fatalities have long outraged Philippine public opinion and threatened the very existence of Filipino fraternities, with their often savage hazing rituals. With the death of neophyte Leonardo Villa during the initiation rites of the Ateneo's Aquila Legis fraternity, the public reaction finally forced President Aquino to act, accepting the resignation of a prominent member, her Deputy Telecommunications Commissioner Florentino Ampil, while the NBI charged 26 others before the Justice Department. Amparo Mariano Almeda, head of the fraternity, was dismissed and expelled from the Ateneo Law School, along with eleven others found involved in the initiation. The President also asked the Congress to outlaw hazing, a measure which if promptly put to a vote, would

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

probably pass.

This uncharacteristically decisive response to public clamor simply reflected the fact that the boundary of what the Philippine public was prepared to tolerate as hazing had at last been overstepped. Villa's was not the first death, and the *Philippines Free Press* had long led a fruitless crusade against the barbarities frequently practiced. What had heretofore limited legal or disciplinary reprimands has been Filipino *machismo*, and more subtly, the protective value of fraternal associates in a society restrained chiefly by family ties and alliances. The upper-class membership of the fraternities expect to be defended and supported by their fraternity brothers in any extra-legal as well as legal activities, and many Filipinos have looked on their capacity to tolerate physical punishment as a claim on future loyalties.

The unexpectedly sharp Ateneo reaction undoubtedly also reflected a bad error by Father Bernas, S.J., who at first defended his institution by pointing out that he had warned students that the university accepted no responsibilities for what they might experience during their initiations. This devious (Jesuitical?) answer enraged critics. . . The moral indignation will of course not last, but during a period of expiation, it has brought a measure of justice to others than the principal victims themselves.

How Some of Cory's Senators Won the 1987 Elections

When Dr. Tancangco of the U.P.'s School of Public Administration suddenly announced that her group of associates had examined the 1987 elections and found them faulty, it was taken for granted that the announcement was made for the purpose of blocking Christian Monsod's nomination to the supremely important constitutional post of Chairman of the Comelec. Since the Tancangco report was primarily aimed at NAMFREL, with which Monsod had been intimately connected, any dirt thrown on the organization would also splatter Monsod, but the two issues are separate. As analyzed by the author in chapter XI, the elections *were* crooked, but it is unlikely that Monsod had anything directly to do with the irregularities. The author's analysis was made in August 1987, drawing on the Tatad White Paper (on which Ms. Tancangco also in part relies), but were based as much on the impossible total votes rendered as the minimal votes cast for six or eight losers who had large personal constituencies, as well as the unbelievable margins of victory on the part of some of the winners with minimal constituencies. Since the Senators presently sitting were the chief beneficiaries of the fraud, they will fight tooth and nail to discredit the report and they will presumably continue to be upheld by the State Department in Washington, which rejected Tatad's White Paper. After all, it had concurred in describing the election as the "most honest and cleanest in Philippine history"(!), and it can scarcely be expected to eat humble pie at this late date. It went wrong, however, because official Washington would believe nothing evil of the Aquino forces and nothing good of the GAD, which they felt was hopelessly

A WEAKENING PRESIDENT YIELDS GROUND

compromised by the presence of Marcos sympathizers among its candidates.

A relatively detached observer, Petronilo Daroy, writing in the *Manila Standard* (3/18/91) focused on what he called "Discrediting the Electoral Crisis:

It is unfortunate that the controversy caused by the research report on the 1987 elections has been personalized into the issue of Christian Monsod's fitness for the chairmanship of the Commission on Elections.

The report did place the activities of the Namfrel under a cloud of suspicion. But, for the record, Namfrel's activities have always been suspect, at least, ever since it was exposed as having been organized by the CIA to ensure that Ramon Magsaysay would be elected President.

When Jose Concepcion, Jr. revived Namfrel for the 1987 snap elections, it was regarded with suspicion. Monsod knows this; in academic forums during the snap election campaign, the origins, motivation and funding of Namfrel were openly questioned. . .

The Tancango study, however, does more than criticize Namfrel or question Monsod's nomination to the Comelec; it also brings into serious question the credibility of the whole electoral process.

Daroy reports how manipulation continues in the Aquino administration:

The controversy provoked by the Tancango study has been further complicated—or simplified, depending on one's perspective—by the resignation of Supreme Court justices from the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal. Their resignation, their response to turn the tribunal into a fraudulent rubber stamp, has further exposed the nature of our electoral process. . .

The most sophisticated comment on the imbroglio was Adrian Cristobal's (*Inquirer*, 3/20/91), referring to Monsod's slick (and evasive) answer to the Tancango charges:

The impending Comelec chairman did not dispute the irregularities in the samples, simply their significance for forming a conclusion. Tancango should have stuck to her guns and strongly argued the significance of her samples.

She said, of course, that it was up to others to disprove her findings. She forgot, however, that the innocence of Namfrel, the Comelec, and the Administration is assumed, since they are the champions of democracy and honesty and integrity in government. Monsod's media approach was simply to cast doubt on her findings and methodology, and he came prepared. Tancango and her colleague, on the other hand, apparently did not anticipate the Namfrel's superior debating and media tactics.

The "Beautifly Life" Scam of Press Secretary Gomez

The journalist Max Soliven coined the word "Imeldific" for expensive, pie-in-the-sky concepts which come loaded down with rhetoric. In November of 1990, Press Secretary Gomez launched a scheme which was Imeldific. He wrote the presidents of the country's twenty largest corporations to invite them to contribute P10 million each to support an institution ("*Pagandahin ang Buhay*) to be devoted to a program of energy conservation and livelihood promotion (to include small-scale piggeries, chicken-raising and backyard gardens). The Press Secretary was positively lyrical:

There is in the air a tingle of anticipation: the nation is awaiting decisive, dramatic action to address the crisis. Something that will demonstrate once

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

and for all the will of this country and a people's resolve to act positively. The vision and character that your company has shown through the years makes us confident that you will be receptive and willing to spearhead this wide-ranging, far-reaching developmental project as a PRIME MOVER SPONSOR.

You are one of the twenty corporate giants who compose the initial core group that will help catalyze change and make our country a revitalized Filipino nation. The people are waiting to be led into a bright future. It is our task to lead, to bring about a better life for all, *para pagandahin ang buhay ng bawat Filipino* (to beautify the life of every Filipino). Let us not make him wait any longer.

The letter and its contents of course leaked, and on February 5, Senator Mercado, in a privilege speech, denounced it as a brazen violation of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct for public officials, which forbids the solicitation of gifts. Gomez was clearly guilty, but like Imelda, claimed justification by invoking what he called higher purposes. When Gomez defended himself by calling Senator Mercado "stupid", the Senator riposted that he might be stupid, but he was clean, rhetorically asking, "How do we convince the people, let alone the IMF, that we are serious in cutting our expenditures when we throw away millions at a time like this?"

Senator Mercado showed that the "Foundation" to which Gomez referred as the recipient of their bounty was in fact non-existent, even though the Press Secretary had called a meeting of the representatives of the 20 corporations to Malacañang on November 20, 1990, promising tax deductions and other incentives to the contributors. Gomez was then forced to admit that he was unauthorized to offer such incentives.

Imelda used to joke that B.I.R. meant "Bureau of Imelda Revenue". The same bureau apparently continues to operate. Gomez, lacking both Imelda's charm and clout, was therefore checkmated, despite indications that the corporations were prepared to ante up. Their criticism had nothing to do with Codes of Conduct or legal inhibitions. They simply objected that the sums suggested were "too much". (*Philippines Free Press*, 3/28/91). As far as the public was concerned, Gomez suffered little but embarrassment, since such money-raising schemes, supported by carrot and stick, are expected from the government. After the businessmen yield, they expect, and receive, equivalent favors.

Chapter XV

MT. PINATUBO, ORMOC, GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE, AND OTHER DISASTERS

As expected, the initial salvos fired in the campaign for the Presidency in 1992 detonated in the Spring of 1991, but they were temporarily forced into the background when Mt. Pinatubo, dormant for six hundred years, erupted just as the nation celebrated its Independence Day. The painful repercussions of this natural calamity were at once felt on all the major issues of the day—the Philippines-U.S. base negotiations, the staggering economy, and Mrs. Aquino's position as President. The presidential campaign paused for a few days, but quickly resumed even as the population surrounding Pinatubo was streaming away from the volcano. Situated in close proximity to both the U.S. air base at Clark Field and its naval base at Subic Bay, the disaster brought those two major operations to a standstill and covered Manila and surrounding areas with a heavy ash fall. Manila, however, was 60 miles away from Pinatubo, while Clark Field lay only 10 miles distant. Olongapo, the town which hosts Subic, was 25 miles away. U.S. Air Force personnel, except for maintenance personnel, were hurriedly evacuated first to Subic and then flown out to Cebu in the south for return to the United States. The Mayors of Angeles City and Olongapo were highly critical of what they considered the precipitate departure of Air Force personnel and dependents from Clark and the refusal of Subic commanders to accommodate Filipino evacuees.

The First Effects of the Eruption

Predictably, the Philippine Government's reaction to the eruption was slow and faltering, though the non-governmental sector rushed to render assistance. The speed, decisiveness and efficiency of the U.S. Air Force and Navy's evacuation made the government's Disaster Coordinating Committee's fumbling efforts, and its chief, General Fidel Ramos, look bad by comparison. As usual, the government couldn't get its act together, but self-motivated Filipino activity to provide emergency assistance to families and communities, with the aid of commercial broadcasters and generous private donations, took up much of the slack. Moralists of course rushed to the air waves and into public print to call the eruption God's judgment on the prostitution and blackmarketing that surrounded the bases, and the insidious feeling that Cory Aquino might be *malas* (bad luck) for the Filipinos because she refused to let Imelda return with President Marcos' remains escalated to the point that President Aquino felt it necessary to issue a statement that she was not *malas*(!) The Filipino that professed to be least impressed by Pinatubo's devastation was Foreign Minister Manglapus, who said that nothing had changed; he was standing firm on the Filipino demands for compensation and length of tenure of the bases. Manila

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Mayor Mel Lopez, under cover of a heavy ashfall from Mt. Pinatubo sent a crew of hoodlums to vandalize the historic Army Navy club, with which he had a dispute over unpaid taxes.

Other Issues Before the Eruption: The PCGG

The months of early Spring were not without important political and economic developments: the PCGG, land reform and the state of the economy, as well as the bases, a debate that never ceased. No single government agency has so disappointed the public as the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG). At first headed by Jovito Salonga, who achieved little but accept certain voluntary surrenders of property by a few Marcos cronies and then ran triumphantly for the Senate, the PCGG has essentially recovered nothing on its own. Art Borjal of the *Star*, a strong supporter of President Aquino, wrote (5/6/91) that it was "time to bury the PCGG." It had lost the tons of documents captured when the Marcoses fled, as well as those turned over by friendly governments either to Marcos collaborators or to thieves, but the worst fault with the PCGG was that its lawyers were second-raters:

We can only recall what Rep. Raul Roco of Camarines Sur said about the PCGG some time ago. The description was apt and terse. Raul said: "PCGG's record remains untarnished by victory." What a quote.

We cannot accept that bull about the extra brilliance of the cronies' lawyers. Every lawyer who has been up against [them] knows the PCGG lawyers are lemons. . .

There are only two ways of dealing with the PCGG. The first is to scrap it at long last, a move which seems necessary at this time. The second is to revamp it from bottom to top.

The *Free Press*, in 1991 less a reformist than an anti-American organ, did its best (5/11/91) to find good things to say about David Castro (cover page photo) but its staff writers found little to praise and much to criticize. Its solution to the problem: "To fight an extraordinarily complex scheme of massive corruption, you need extraordinary weapons. The presumption of innocence should be shifted; the crony should have the burden of proving the asset was acquired lawfully." The *Free Press* had always venerated Magna Carta, but now recommended jettisoning its talisman in order to deal with the evils it attributed to Marcos and his cronies. However, the Swiss balked at turning over alleged Marcos loot; they still insisted that Marcos (now Imelda) first be convicted on criminal charges, which required her presence in the Philippines. This requirement caused the PCGG to charge the Swiss government with bad faith for its failure to seize Marcos' ill-gotten wealth supposedly cached in Switzerland. But Mel Aquino, once President Macapagal's Ambassador to Germany, objected in the *Bulletin*:

Certain considerations of law and public policy claim general attention. One is that the Philippine government cannot sit in judgment of the fairness and efficacy of a foreign government's judicial system. Another is that it is outrageous to expect a foreign government to bend its laws and constitutional

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

processes to the wishes or demands of the Philippine government. Still another is that the Swiss government abides by the universally accepted doctrine that guilt cannot be assumed, but should be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

Land Reform: Cory's Forgotten "Centerpiece"

President Aquino had long since given up references to land reform as the centerpiece of her government, as well she might, since it was by now one of her administration's most conspicuous failures. Her strong supporter, the *Inquirer*, editorialized (4/10/91):

A *Kapihan sa Maynila* forum devoted to the agrarian reform program last Monday turned out to be a "funeral oration," to quote Rep. Bonifacio Gillego, one of the staunchest critics in the House of the "watered-down" CARP. Indeed, in a rare display of unanimity among all sectors involved in the issue, representatives of government, farmers and landowners agreed with Gillego's assessment that CARP is "now a corpse."

DAR officials have been reduced to touting non-achievements, or claiming credit for their predecessor government's work:

In reply to the landowners' complaint about low compensation offers, Agrarian Reform Secretary Benjamin Leong cites "lack of funds". But even this turns out to be a deception since Budget Secretary Guillermo Carague said that funds for CARP are available, but that the line agencies, DAR presumably in the lead, have chosen to let the money remain untouched.

In the circumstances, it was unpardonable effrontery for Philip Juico, disgraced ex-DAR chief, to address a San Francisco California gathering headed by Leftist expatriate Walden Bello, to claim progress under the Aquino administration. As reported by the *Standard* (4/22/91), he said "The Aquino government has been accused of being pro-tenant only because the past dictatorial regime was pro-landlord too long." A review of four years of the CARP, however, by Leonardo Montemayor of the Federation of Free Farmers (*Newsday*, 6/17/91) totally exploded Juico's thesis: "Despite claims that CARP-implementation in 1990 reached record levels, a closer study reveals that the bulk of this accomplishment was on lands already covered by land transfer programs started and about to be completed by previous administrations."

The Debate on the National Economy

The state of the national economy was best followed from the criticisms of the *Bulletin's* economics commentator Rodolfo Romero on the views of Bernardo Villegas of the Center for Research and Communications (CRC). Thus on March 28, Romero criticized Villegas' "exuberance" on the state of the economy on the grounds that the country's tax efforts remained inadequate (far less than that generated in Thailand and Malaysia), and insisted that the calibre of Philippine industry was low: most of it was inefficient and hence uncompetitive, its exports performance was dismal (no change of emerging from the present "garments-and-electronic products syndrome"), and its agricultural

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

sector was weak—rice, sugar, coconut, and cash crops yields were lower than regional norms, and future crops were further menaced by ecological degradation.

Villegas, however, hoped for success from private investment, urging a “truly short list of requirements for foreign investors” (*more* rather than less attractive than that offered by regional competitors). Recommending the House Bill, he wrote (*Bulletin*, 5/25/91):

Our experiences over the last forty years is that protecting existing industries against the entry of foreign equity capital tended to benefit an elite group of national and entrenched multinational enterprises that enjoyed a highly protected domestic market. The losers have been the unemployed and the Filipino consumers who could not get the highest-quality products at the lowest price possible.

Nap Rama zeroed in on “the danger of letting politics make economic decisions” in *Panorama* (5/5/91):

They have seen what happened to macho economists and near-economists, specializing in first-shaking at the super powers and their international creditors, and are now begging to be accepted into the world financial system after their macho economic policies had brought ruin to their countries.

However, the politicians failed to heed Rama’s warning, as the *Chronicle* (7/11/91) editorialized:

No, it isn’t Pinatubo, nor the earthquake, nor the typhoons that drive investments away. Politics and the inconsistency of policies are the more significant downers. Investors are unsure, who if any, is in charge here. Investors want to know in clear terms what the rules are and who is in charge. The petrochemical plant is often cited as an example. It had been approved by the government investments board, publicly supported by no less than the President of the Republic but was torpedoed by other bureaucrats with the help of politicians. Thereafter, even the Supreme Court entered the picture, dictating economic policy.

U. S. Base Negotiations Before Pinatubo: Bashing the Americans

As early as March 27, the *Inquirer* was lecturing the Filipino employees at Camp John Hay that they had benefited long enough from their jobs at the recreational facility and that Filipino self-respect demanded that the camp should revert to Filipino control. It editorialized:

... the [bread-and-butter] issues should not detract from our determination to operate the facilities as a crucial first step to asserting our independence from our former colonial masters.

As it is, we have tarried long enough in moving toward this direction, swayed by the protests of those who see only their own interests and pulled back by the thought of extra responsibilities that come with the territory.

But it is time to bite the bullet, time to assert our sovereignty and suffer the pain that comes with the privilege.

Here and there, voices were heard that warned that the experience with the turnover of Sangley in 1971 and the recent experience with Camp O’Donnel and San Miguel boded ill. The *Bulletin* (3/28/91) reported:

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

Concern for the effective maintenance of Camp John Hay in the hands of the Philippine managers have been expressed following the unhappy experience of Camp O'Donnel, a US naval communication center in Capas, Tarlac, and its San Miguel sister station in Zambales.

Days after the US left these two other bases to the management of the Philippines, scavengers began to raid the facilities, pilfering copper wires and other valuable items under the very nose of military guards.

The *Inquirer* even found recent favorable reports from Washington disquieting. What mischief was the Great Satan up to in saying good things about the Philippine government? Editor Pascual reported that Carl Ford, deputy Assistant Defense Secretary as testifying (3/27/91) that "For the first time in over a year, a general mood of optimism now prevails over the (Philippine) domestic political scene." Pascual objected:

Maybe the US embassy has clear sparkling water coming out of its taps and has borrowed the motels' giant generators that ensure no brownouts.

Maybe Ambassador Nicholas Platt's bullyguards have reached peak efficiency in clearing traffic whenever he whizzes through city streets.

Maybe US embassy phones always get clear signals, never busy buzzes or idiotic messages like "The number you've dialed is not yet in service" when we dial for PLDT's repair service.

Or maybe our American friends have flashed the all-clear signal for the election of Eddie Ramos as the next president. . .

There's really no need for all that sweet talk. They will get what they want anyway even without having to praise us to high heavens.

However, once again Nap Rama's was the voice of reason. It was the time for "innovative approaches," he insisted in *Panorama* (4/14/91):

We'd be better off getting commercial concessions, bigger trade quotas, debt-reduction schemes, bond-floating, forward-financing than bigger cash compensation that has to be approved by a penny-pinching, post Gulf war US congress. . .

There are many other schemes for making the most out of the bases negotiations to help solve the most demeaning of our problem—mass poverty. The leftists, most responsible for delaying the negotiations, ought to know by now that there's no way they would win on the bases issue and should stop delaying and let the impoverished masses enjoy the bonanza from the bases now.

Leftism is dead. And our native-born leftists don't seem to know. .

The America-haters were not deterred, though Locsin, in the *Free Press* (4/20/91) would settle for a three year extension, if the Americans were prepared to negotiate a treaty rather than an executive agreement: "The US insisted that the extension of the bases must be by mere executive agreement. It was as though they regarded the Philippine Constitution as just the verbal custom of a tribe of niggers." This inanity, perpetrated by a self-anointed expert on foreign affairs, testified not to lack of knowledge (he is a lawyer and knows that the problem with a treaty is that it requires legislative approval, while an executive agreement can be negotiated by the two presidents), but to bad temper and pique. He even talked sense on the problem of criminal jurisdiction:

The Americans insisted that criminal jurisdiction over US servicemen would not change, the few US servicemen who commit gross breaches of the law would be exempt from Philippine justice. . . By and large, US servicemen

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

behave properly. And it is not as though the Philippine justice system is oppressive like the Turkish, or inexorable like the American. If anything, a foreigner, like a local, gets off scot-free in our courts.

In his column of the 27th, Locsin, whose heart bleeds for the Chinese (Weren't the British responsible for the notorious sign in Shanghai, "Dogs and Chinese Keep Out"?), happily predicted violence on the Asian mainland, which he felt would benefit the Philippines:

When the Asian mainland explodes in violence, we, the far-enough away island states, will be the only show in this part of the world. Then we can invite a superpower in, on our terms.

What I am saying is this: Never mind the big rental. Let the US bases stay for peanuts, for a short time. This is not the time to conclude a long-term lease—the US doesn't have the money we need, and we are in no position to get a better deal.

A little later, senior journalist and publisher Max Soliven (*Star*, 5/6/91) found a way to give U.S. negotiator Armitage a hot-foot:

When I met some close friends in Jakarta (Indonesia) some weeks ago, including Sabam Siagian, the editor of the *Jakarta Post* who has just been appointed the new Indonesian ambassador to Australia, they were unanimous in expressing their dislike of Armitage. One of them asserted that he had bragged at one session held recently in Bali that America didn't need the bases in the Philippines as much as we (Filipinos) think. Was he merely showing off to the Indons and the other ASEAN delegates, or was he sending a "poker bluff" sort of message to us—via the Indonesian? In any event, my friend Siagian thought Armitage was an irritating blowhard and wondered aloud why US President Bush had sent him as a "negotiator", when negotiators are supposed to be diplomatic, not abrasive.

The publication in the United States of Bob Woodward's *The Commanders* which described the Phantom intervention to rescue the Aquino government, of course caused a brief storm of abuse, with pundits recalling the event. Soliven (*Star*, 5/20/91) wrote:

It's well known that our President in desperation, rang up Washington DC and asked for help . . . it was even requested that the American Air Force actually bomb the military rebels.

President Aquino, of course, afterwards shrugged off those so-called "persuasion flights" by the US Phantom jets, indicating that her government was saved by the late, heroic PAF Major Danny Atienza.

In any event, Gates came to Manila and told President Aquino that the Americans had intervened this time, but could not go on supporting her regime unless she instituted four reforms. One of them was to revamp her Cabinet, the other was to weed out graft and corruption.

. . . the President was so incensed at being lectured by Gates that, still smarting from that encounter, she retaliated by snubbing US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney when he arrived later in the Philippines. Ever since that snub, a chill settled on our relations with Washington DC.

Cristobal (*Inquirer*, 5/22/91), obviously expecting no answer, called upon Ambassador Platt to deny Woodward's charge:

Public interest requires Platt and Mrs. Aquino clarify matters in the wake of Woodward's provocative assertions. This is one instance where national security cannot be invoked, since without a denial, the Woodward version

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

will stand as an indictment of a Filipino president's sense of proportion, if not of courage.

Bases Negotiations: The ABC of Anti-Americanism

The most insightful comment on anti-Americanism yet heard in the Manila press was inspired by Antonio Abaya's calculations that based on research findings, as many as 80-90% of the Filipinos wished to see U.S. base rights continued. This prompted the columnist to sketch a taxonomy of the Hate America Philippine Left (*Chronicle*, 7/3/91):

Holy Jesus! Isn't anything sacred anymore? Does this mean that all those screaming graffiti splattered across metro walls and traffic islands; all those menacing red banners fluttering on Plaza Ferguson and Liwasang Bonifacio; all those hate-laden articles and columns in the "Daily Globe" and the "Daily Inquirer", in the late, unlamented "WHO" magazine during the Marcos era, in the vintage-1986 "Malaya", "Manila Times" and Manila Chronicle; all those self-righteous diatribes and fulminations in rallies, teach-ins and seminars; all those naive nuns and priests kapit-bisig-ing with KMU and KMP street fighters and ABB assassins . . . have all these been for nothing?

It is enough to make a certified anti-American revolutionary lose all hope in the Revolution and, well, migrate posthaste to North America. Which is where in fact many VIPs (very inconsistent Pinoys) have actually wound up. Such as the daughter of Dodong Nemenzo, the tireless snoop Walden Bello, the family of Joma Sison, Joaquin Po and most of his stridently anti-American children, KM sex kitten Ninotchka Rosca, the master of the impenetrable prose Epifanio San Juan and his equally impenetrable (I refer to her writing style) wife . . . all in patiently waiting for the downfall of America as they shuffle from shopping mall to cable TV to the latest mind-blowing fad from Berkeley.

In Abaya's analysis, Philippine nationalism had always had shallow roots in the Philippine bourgeoisie (Recto), and hence anti-Americans could only find a home on the Philippine Left. Now, with the worldwide humiliation of Communism, the Left had no other issue than anti-Americanism. Abaya added that if the political genius Ferdinand Marcos had betrayed nationalism in favor of plunder, his successor, the political naif Mrs. Aquino, "understood nothing, learned nothing, and conceptualized nothing" of nationalism.

The 1992 Presidential Campaign (I)

One thing the Mt. Pinatubo eptions failed to affect materially was the election campaign. It proceeded on two levels, one, the person and performance of President Aquino, and the other, the maneuvers of the principal candidates and their supporters. Since the Opposition agreed that Mrs. Aquino was vulnerable, but suspected she would be the candidate finally fielded by her brother and chief political strategist Peping Cojuangco, they kept up a steady barrage against her policies and person. Polls showed that her popularity and approval ratings continued at low levels, but that she would be hard to beat with the

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

opposition candidates available. She and the performance of her government would therefore continue to be a major issue.

Mrs. Aquino's (Peping's?) most recent major initiative, the buildup of Oscar Orbos, her dynamic Executive Secretary, as a presidential aspirant went splendidly for some time—perhaps too splendidly—until word of her displeasure with his performance obliged him to resign in July, fueling suspicion that Peping, after successively fielding and then felling a series of presidential aspirants (Mitra, Ramos, Orbos and possibly as yet unselected scapegoats) would finally persuade Cory, in order to save the country from Marcos (dead or alive) and Imelda, to assume the burdens of the presidency for yet another six years. She might even run with Chief Justice Fernan, who had so far found the Chief Justice's post more attractive than a vice-Presidential nomination by the Liberal Party.

Peping's Orbos gambit had been greeted by Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc (*Inquirer*, 5/2/91) in a very informative and insightful column:

Too much is being made of Oscar Orbos as the President's "secret successor."

In the first place, Orbos as the Lady's Choice has not been exactly secret. One only has to see Orbos—whenever he forgets himself and does what comes naturally to him—putting an arm about the President, his trademark approach to friends and strangers alike which is by now familiar to the media.

Surprisingly, the President has not been observed to recoil from the Orbos touch. This is the President with her no-touch policy who kept a visiting South American president at a distance to discourage him from coming at her with his effusive *abrazos*.

In other words, the President and Orbos are extremely comfortable with each other. Comfortable is the operative word in the Guest House that spans the difference between closeness and distance to the President. Orbos is as gentle and mindful of her every wish as he's with his widowed mother.

So close have the President and her "Little President" become that the one official believed to be closest to the President being also a pre-EDSA original, Alran Bengzon, is reportedly "sulking" to the point that he may join the LP senatorial slate.

Orbos without any prior links to the Aquinos appears in the past four months to have succeeded in alienating the presidential affections away from the health secretary.

Whether it was Orbos or anti-Orbos strategists that had authored a clandestine Orbos-for-President program was discussed shrewdly. Jimenez-Magsanoc then continued:

So what if there is indeed such a plan? All presidentialiables, Orbos included, are drawing up their own campaign plans. That makes a lot of sense. What doesn't is putting down in black and white the dirty tricks allegedly contemplated to tear into the Orbos rivals. . .

The timing of the expose is by itself suspicious. It came three days after an un-named Malacañang source who looked a lot like Orbos generously leaked the name of retired Gen. Renato de Villa as the Ramos replacement at defense. Translation: Ramos has to go sooner than later.

Peping's strategy, however, could not cover all the bases. Mrs. Aquino's most unforgiving tormentor (whom she never reads), Kit Tatad, recalled (*Newsday*,

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

3/20/91) a political boo-boo by her aides which she failed to neutralize (an incident that was otherwise ignored in the public print). The President's entourage had insulted Mayor Ganson of Iloilo on a visit to that important city. Tatad's version, headlined "An Acute Case of Bad Manners," was of course very pro-Ganson. He pictured the scene:

With typical Ilonggo geniality on his face, he extends a hand of welcome to the President. But before she can respond, an Ilonggo congressman plants himself in-between host and guest and aborts the ceremonial handshake. The usual security men and others crowd around Mrs. Aquino, as the poor city mayor confronts the naked reality of having been snubbed like US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney on his last Manila visit. . .

At the playing grounds, the ceremony is delayed by the demands of Malacañang security. Several battalions of presidential security, shipped in from Manila, occupy most of the grandstand. Again Ganson makes ready to receive Mrs. Aquino. She arrives, borne in her bomb-proof German-made limousine specially transported to Iloilo city. The mayor makes his second attempt to extend the official welcome of the city. The ill-mannered and uncouth congressman is no longer around, but this time a security aide plants himself in-between the President and the *Timawa* mayor and foils the handshake a second time. The President is led to her seat: her retinue takes all seats of honor flanking her, and Ganson is relegated to an obscure place many many rows away.

Mayor Ganson, a battler, had his revenge. When his turn came to speak, he ignored the President and had to be pulled from the stage to let the ceremony proceed. Special poignance to this face-off was given by the fact that Ganson cast the deciding vote in the Senate electoral tribunal's decision to permit Ninoy Aquino's election to the Senate in 1969.

Another *Newsday* critic, Amargo Raz, who often draws blood with his brief front-paged paragraphs, wrote (5/17/91) that Cory would of course be a candidate in 1992:

The signs are all there. From the resolute effort to pack the top of the AFP, the police, the Comelec with officials personally loyal to her, to the same fevered effort to siphon off funds into Kabisig, to the latest effort to project a new media image, to her sudden visibility in remote areas. She's got it all rigged up, and only the Supreme Court, a successful coup or an act of God can stop her.

The *Chronicle's* Alex Magno (7/12/91) thought that her government was such a shambles that she should simply concentrate on surviving until 1992, rather than to look beyond that date.

Another commentator who had things straight was Luis Teodoro, *Standard* columnist, who pointed out that Mrs. Aquino wanted to know who would be her opponents before declaring her candidacy:

How many people will be running will after all determine Mrs. Aquino's chances as much as who she'll be running against, and I suspect that she knows she hasn't got a chance, despite Comelec and Namfrel, for a credible victory if the opposition fields only one or two reputable candidates next year. Under these circumstances, her best bet is to deny she's running so as to encourage as many people as possible to run—to cause the opposition groups as well as her own ambitious allies to include her non-running into their calculations.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Sub rosa, the *Globe's* candidate was of course Mrs. Aquino, as its publisher Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr., salivates at the thought he might once again become the President's speech writer. For the time being he could exert himself to savaging the current candidates, especially Fidel Ramos, whom he can't forgive for being a general and even countermanding his orders to bomb the television station temporarily captured by the anti-Aquino soldiers when he was in charge of government television. Since in Locsin's tunnel vision, the one test of a true-blue believer in democracy is to damn Marcos for the past, present and future troubles of the Philippines, General Ramos must first of all swear fealty to Ninoy Aquino's memory (*Free Press*, 4/13/91):

General Ramos is about as good as they come. He isn't any worse than his rivals for the presidency. But, if he seeks the blessings of Mrs. Aquino, he must at least say he is sorry for the part he played in the imposition of martial law which took, first the liberty, and then the life, of the father of her children.

The Opposition's Problem: Too Many Candidates

The Opposition's problem was simple but formidable: how to reduce the number of candidates to a minimal choice between Aquino and her opponents. Speaker Mitra and Defense Secretary Ramos were battling neck-to-neck for nomination by the LDP, the government party, but there were signs that a deal between the *Nacionalista* party's four candidates might be structured to accommodate them all: Laurel as President, Enrile as Senate President, Danding Cojuangco as House Speaker and the favorite of the masses. Senator Estrada, as vice President.

The wiliest and most knowledgeable politician of them all, Senator Ernesto Maceda, skillfully analyzed the presidential prospects of the candidates in the *Bulletin* (6/24&91). In a long interview, he was quoted as saying:

The fanatic supporters of Ramos have figured in brawls and other rowdy incidents with their counterparts in the camp of Mitra in the LDP regional assemblings in Tacloban City and Cavite City last month. . .

But this prompted party leaders to postpone the next assembly scheduled in Bicol this month.

Maceda feared further violence affecting his own plans. He might not even run for Senator: "In this atmosphere, some people might be taking pot shots in political polls." The Senator opposed the nomination of de Villa as Ramos' replacement: "It was during de Villa's term as AFP Chief of Staff that the most number of *coups d'etat* occurred." President Aquino has strangely not called a special session of Congress to deal with relief for the victims of Mt. Pinatubo. The occasion, said Maceda, would have provided opportunities for the LDP politicians to "counterfeit their sympathies for the victims of the tragedy."

The Spectre of Imelda's Return

The U.S. *Insight Magazine's* article on "The War of the Widows" by Stephen

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

Brooke, remarkably enough for someone unfamiliar with the Philippines, was generally good, and should have awakened greater interest than it did. It was reprinted in *Newsday* on June 7. Of special interest was the information (if true) that former General Jimmy Zumel, long head of Imelda's bodyguard detail, was in the Philippines. Brooke lost much of his credibility, however, by the outrageous statement that any Imelda-inspired coup would make use of "a scurrilous pack like Zumel, Honasan and Ver." They may all be regarded as scurrilous by Coryistas, but Honasan's standing is much higher with the public in general.

Despite his intention to bash Imelda, Brooke included material detrimental to the PCGG and he did not write off Danding Cojuangco as a monster. Thus he wrote of David Castro's depredations on Leyte,

where a group of bounty hunters broke into the Marcos family mausoleum in search of gold—and did it under Castro's orders. Work was cut off in mid-April after the diggers were fired on by unidentified assailants, but not before the bones of Marcos's parents had been dug up, pawed through and left on the ground. Castro has gone on record as saying he had been told about the vaults by a witness who had seen them being built, and while he had no indication that there was any gold in them, he thought he might as well investigate.

In assessing Imelda's strength, Brooke overestimated it:

... she might just bring it off. The Marcos name has more clout than any other in the Philippines, though it's hard to judge just how much people are willing to forgive and forget. "She certainly has a large number of friends and supporters," says a Western diplomat in Manila. "They were in charge for a long, long time. . . ." Another experienced observer is more blunt: "There's a certain amount of self-delusion in her own mind about how popular she is."

Deluded or not, Imelda herself is unfettered by doubt. "Oh, definitely," she says, waving a confident hand in the air, when asked if her image has changed. "The truth is starting to prevail; all the propaganda is now being shown as false."

Brooke grossly exaggerated the power of Imelda's purse where there are other deep-pocket competitors, but he included the observation, "she's pretty low as far as voter preference goes for president", and that there were "at least 10 people in front of her "a point made by Mahar Mangahas, head of the polling group Social Weather Stations in Manila. "People may feel that she should be shown more compassion perhaps, but I don't think that will change voter preference."

Continuing his analysis of the power of Imelda's money, Brookes' choice of Philippine experts in Washington was odd. James Clad did good work for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* for several years, but he can claim no special expertise, compared to, say, Larry Niksch at the Library of Congress or a few American academics (Wurfel) or newspapermen (Karnow, maybe). Brooke writes:

... when you're as rich as Imelda Marcos, voter preference is whatever you want it to be. It's reliably estimated to cost about \$40 million to run a campaign in the Philippines, and with high levels of unemployment, the vote-buying in the next election could reach epidemic proportions. "The rent-a-crowd phenomenon used week after week by the Marcoses in the late 1970s to

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

generate support is still a possibility", notes James Clad, a Philippines expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

In discussing Cojuangco, Brooke quotes an "American diplomat" who sounds like either ex-Ambassador Armacost or Bosworth, both of whom always underestimated or bad-mouthed Cojuangco:

Cojuangco has been pressing the flesh and passing out favors in recent months, testing the waters for a campaign. He's launched a new group called the Filipino Party and armed it with a huge war chest. Known as a sophisticated and capable businessman, Cojuangco is said to understand the politics of patronage better than anyone. But many of his assets have been seized by the Aquino government because of his association with Marcos, and now he wants them back. "No one is really sure if Cojuangco wants to run," says another Western diplomat, "or if he's getting ready to support someone who would free him from this web of sequestrations that hamper his business empire."

Arroyo's Case vs. the Americans

On June 22, 1991, Joker Arroyo, Philippines' foremost Machiavellian* elucidated a Filipino case for anti-Americanism. Couched in historical terms, it was ostensibly an appeal to nationalism rather than an outright demand for a return to the Byzantine control of the Palace and the President which he, Teddy Locsin and a few others exercised for over two years at Malacañang. It was outrageous history, but delivered at the University of the Philippines, a campus dominated by Renato Constantino and a crew of consciousness-raising nationalists, it received a respectful hearing. Bereft of truth in any its details, it deserves study as a pathology which still infects the Philippine body politic, particularly the Senate.

Arroyo began by asserting that at all points in their mutual history, either indifference or perfidy dominated the American attitude toward the Philippines, while trusting gullibility characterized the reciprocal Filipino attitude. The United States, because it was "unable to compete in the Atlantic(!)," went to the Pacific "to flex its muscles," and drew the Philippines into its orbit after smashing "the ageing Spanish fleet in Manila Bay." (This Spanish fleet was indeed no match for Dewey's steel-clads, but there were at sea two other Spanish fleets, one in Cuba and another in the Mediterranean.) The cession of the Philippines was not a major condition of peace, but "just something thrown in for good measure(!)". The Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American war, was indeed approved by only one vote, but the U.S. Senate opposition was based not on indifference, as Arroyo claimed, but on the fear that annexation would drive the United States in this direction of imperialism. It was to alleviate this

*One is tempted to say Leninist, except that Arroyo's goals are not Communist, but control by a tight circle of power-lusting lawyers behind a screen of democracy. He would have been at home with either the Borgias or the Romanos.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

fear that the subsequent Taft policy of benevolent assimilation was developed. Arroyo, totally ignorant of what went on in Washington in those days (See Leech's *In the Days of McKinley*) makes the absurd claim that placing the Philippines under the administration of the War Department "signified that the only value it would ever acquire was as the site of military and naval bases(!)." (He ignores the demonstrable fact that the United States had no colonial office or any other office authorized or equipped to administer overseas territory.)

Arroyo further asserted that two Presidents, Quezon and Quirino, and two important politicians, Juan Sumulong and Claro Recto, had objected to the military bases, but neglected to add that both Quezon (on Corregidor) and Quirino as President heartily approved of them, while even Recto came to value them as a counter to what he called "Japanese Monroeism." Later Presidents—Osmeña, Roxas and Laurel, Arroyo alleged, accepted them only in order to obtain a pledge of Philippine independence. This is of course another distortion of history. Osmeña wanted the bases, Roxas also wanted them (but located outside Manila), and Laurel never opposed them. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 eliminated army, but not naval bases, which Arroyo claims were the same things ("same dog, different collar"), ignoring that sailors are usually away at sea and soldiers occupy land. The speaker further exhibited his ignorance of history by arguing that the Second World War showed the "utter uselessness of the bases for the country's defence"(!) What World War II showed, on the contrary, was that bases are useless if not adequately supported by the home country. The bases, Arroyo went on to insist, were simply a "magnet for aggression(!)". He was again wrong. The magnet was Southeast Asian economic resources, particularly oil; the bases were an obstacle to be neutralized. The Philippines, the speaker asserted, also failed after the war to gain "genuine independence" as did Indonesians, Vietnamese and Indians. (Like many ultra-patriots. Arroyo is apologetic that no comparable Filipino ocean of blood was shed in achieving independence.) Subsequently, according to the Arroyo thesis, the Americans made the mistake of judging the Communist world as a monolith, when it was in fact only comradely cooperation. (Such comradely cooperation brought Soviet missiles to Cuba only a hundred miles or so from U.S. territory.)

It can be argued that the United States *did* lead the Filipinos by the nose into resisting the Communist Korea aggression (co-optation that richly paid off in economic aid and a strengthening of the Quirino government), but not, as he claimed, into a confrontation with the "great and ancient empire of China to which every Asian country had always paid respect." This is less than a half-truth. China traditionally forced every neighbor to pay tribute as well as respect, and China, captured by the Communists, was an aggressive power, as it demonstrated in Tibet, Viet Nam and Korea. (The Arroyo-Locsin cabal is always tenderly solicitous of China; whether racial sympathies or simply their ambitions as power brokers are at work here is a matter of dispute.) Arroyo reached his climax by the debater's device of loudly asserting a proposition without offering any evidence:

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

In 1972, the Philippines stepped out of the Free World with the permission, nay encouragement, of the US government. President Ferdinand E. Marcos, a distinguished alumnus so lavishly honored by the university of this time, imposed martial law after clearing his move with the US president.

Every free institution we copied from the United States was abolished; while every device of oppression popular with despotisms throughout history was substituted in their place. Every American administration—the Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan—extended the utmost support to the dictatorship, . .

This is nonsense. Anyone (such as the author) who served in the Embassy during the period knows that the United States never lost touch with the opposition, and did its best, at times effectively, to restrain the Marcos government when and as it deteriorated.

Arroyo then proceeds to his one legitimate argument, though he of course exaggerates and misuses it:

. . . US official speaking to opposition leaders asked only one question. Not, "How goes the cause of freedom?" But, "Where do you stand on the US bases?"

Ninoy Aquino's answer was that the money the US paid for its bases went to defray the cost of torturing and murdering Filipinos.

It is of course true that visiting U.S. officials were preoccupied with the bases—perhaps unduly so, but the record of the Aquino government, guided for over two years by the Arroyo-Locsin tandem, gave every indication that it was an enemy of the policies of the United States. It is useful to have Arroyo's speech to confirm this fact, which should be carefully noted by U.S. representatives as a basis in its future dealings with the Philippines.

Ambassador Platt's Last Address

When Ambassador Platt showed up at Rotary on July 11, to deliver what he called his last address, he had been four years in the country. He chose, perhaps wisely, to ignore such fulminations as Arroyo's, and joyously affirmed the habitual cliches of eternal Filipino-American friendship. However, the familiar pieties had lost their resonance among most of his listeners. It seemed overdue for a change from the sentimental to the practical. That he left up to his successor, Frank Wisner, whose appointment had already been announced, and of whom the outgoing Ambassador spoke warmly.

The speech included the by-now obligatory fanfare for the Aquino government: "the word that best describes the Filipino character is 'unbreakable'. Neither the shock of earthquake, the flood of typhoon, or terrifying roar of volcano can bend the Filipino spirit. Nor will coup-plotters or Sparrow assassins snap it." The ties that bound the Philippines and the United States would hold, Platt was sure, because

We have talked together, we have laughed together, we have shared "tsismis" (gossip) together, we sang together, and, yes, we have argued together. And if I have learned one thing from my four years here, it is that we are better together than we could ever be separately; that united we are a force to reckon with; that despite the occasional arguments or misunder-

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

standing that mark any close relationship, there is much more that unites us.

The author of these lines was never privy to any of Ambassador Platt's strategy sessions, but he would have liked an answer to the question of whether ignoring for four years the systematic distortions by administration supporters of the history of the relations between the United States and the Philippines (probably on the theory that it only gave scoundrels underserved publicity) was the best policy. It cannot be denied that those who sat at the head table on the occasions when Ambassador Platt spoke publicly usually responded favorably to the tried-and-true tunes of shared suffering on Bataan, past joys, and alluring future prospects of fellowship. The younger elements were fed up with the refrain, but they are not yet in charge. It was probably more prudent to leave that challenge to a successor.

Aquino Government Denounced for its Excessive Spending

A *Chronicle* editorial (7/31/91) hailed a Mitra-led budget reduction intended to cut government expenses by reducing the swollen ranks of government personnel:

Because Congress sliced off the budget to pay the salaries of 66 department undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, Malacañang had little choice but to trim the excess fat. That this is being done less than a year before the expiration of Mrs. Aquino's term, is a pity. But it is better late than never. . .

In sharp violation of election promises to trim the bureaucracy, the Aquino administration found it a duty to give every card-carrying member of the Cory Aquino for President Movement a job in government if he seeks one. As a result, we now have a bureaucracy of two million workers. . .

According to [Chief of Civil Service] Sto. Tomas, for every one employee in the clerical level laid off by the Aquino administration, 2.3 were appointed as replacement. In the executive level, for every one laid off, six were appointed. That explains why every government department has an army of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries where in the past one or two served the purpose.

The rest of the story, however, disappointingly followed the standard script: the President promised to make the lay-offs. The office holders appealed; they would suffer. So the order was revised; the suffering undersecretaries would not be fired, only down-graded to Assistant Secretaries. . . In the end, probably no one would get the axe. That would wait until another administration had job-seekers to satisfy. Not a single Aquino pledge to reduce government expenses had been honored, no more than confiscated businesses privatized, since these businesses offer well-compensated positions for party workers.

The criticism of the Aquino government's overspending also led to invidious (but justified) comparisons between the Marcos and Aquino governments. On August 7, Tatad (*Newsday*) compared spending and achievements:

In six years, the Aquino regime will have spent a budgetary total of one trillion and 500 billion pesos, with nothing and apart from two interchanges in Metro Manila, to show for it—assuming, of course, they are completed.

In contrast, Marcos spent not nearly half that amount in 20 years and yet

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

he built more roads and bridges, schoolhouses, hospitals, government buildings, ports and airports, irrigation dams, hydroelectric and geothermal plants (even a nuclear power plant) than all the presidents before him and after him combined.

The comparison, the author would argue, was not greatly exaggerated except that the monetary figures took no account of rising prices, which would reduce the margins but not the basic contrast. The Marcos regime spent heavily for infrastructure projects which even if overpriced, still stand and serve the public.

Success in the War Against the NPA; Failures Against Criminals

As July passed into August 1991, the Aquino government could boast of one signal success: high NPA officials were falling like ripe fruit, apparently as the result of silver bullets. The Philippine National Police (PNP) on July 30 announced the arrest of 3 top leaders, said to be responsible, among other outrages, for the kidnapping of the Japanese businessman Wakaoji in 1986 and the ambush killing of Col. Nick Rowe of JUSMAG in April 1988. Their capture was undoubtedly promoted by lucrative rewards amounting to P2 million.

The good news, however, was only briefly frontpage material, as an orgy of street crime ensued: one of those killed was the son of an American Embassy official. The killings, Teddy Locsin wrote in the *Free Press* (7/27/91) amounted to a "total breakdown of law." He named names, except in the case of the killer of the Embassy child, whom witnesses testified was Claudio Teehankee, Jr., son of the late Chief Justice and UN representative:

Since the victims were white and the lone fatality was the son of a US embassy official, then, maybe, the government will do something about the breakdown of law and order in Metro Manila. At four in the morning two days ago, three teenagers riding a diplomatic car were stopped just short of their houses in the wealthy enclave of Dasmariñas Village. They were told to get out and kneel on the curb, and then shot—one in the forehead, another in the mouth, and the third in the chest, and died instantly.

Max Soliven, noted columnist and publisher of a daily, has made it his special project to run to the ground the killer of Eldon C. Maguan, a La Salle graduate and young executive, who was killed in San Juan by, of all things, a Chinese businessman named Rolito Go, who objected to Maguan's unwitting obstruction of a characteristically confused attempt to drive against the traffic in a one way street—signs in this town are not in pidgin English or Mandarin—and shot Maguan in the face.

Many of the gun-toting executioners had Chinese names:

Another Chinaman, a certain Dee of the Chinabank family, drives around Makati in a Pajero with an assault rifle, occasionally to show it to the traffic, and telling all and sundry that he is protected by a senator in his cups, Joseph Estrada.

Cory's "Goodbye" Speech and Reactions

The most important aspect of President Cory's State of the Nation address, in which she bid her countrymen goodbye, was that nearly all of the sophisti-

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

cates disbelieved in her pledge. A few thought that she meant it, but would in the end simply succumb to the persons who maneuvered her election and have manipulated her policies since. They will of course argue that she must run again to "preserve democracy" and carry on what she asserts was her dead husband's legacy. Blas Ople, again the most balanced of commentators, wrote in the *Bulletin* (7/25/91) that many of the listening Congressman had "moist eyes" when she finished her speech, which he charitably called her "swan song", adding:

The splendid rhetoric of her speech, however, could not make up for the sheer poverty of tangible accomplishments that it was intended to mask . . . statistics and charts furnished by the different departments were gathered into a glossy white paper headed, "State of the Nation Report 1991."

The White paper boasted of a 30 percent decline in the crime rate over a five-year period, a claim that most of the citizens in Metro Manila will consider insulting to their intelligence. It proclaimed major victories in employment creation, as against the latest report from the National Census and Statistics Office indicating a total open unemployment rate of 20 percent in Metro Manila and 15 percent nationwide. This is the highest in 35 years, according to the UP School of Industrial Relations.

Inflation is the greatest thief of the common man's wage or income. The Aquino administration made a commitment at the beginning of the year to bring back the inflation rate to single digit. It is now hovering at around 20 percent nationwide and still rapidly rising. It is true that interest rates have been brought down from a high of 33 percent to about 17 percent, closer to the rate of inflation, but the 9 percent import levy and the punitive prices of oil and oil products have dampened business dynamism and precipitated more unemployment.

Ople also noted that the president omitted any reference to plans for assistance to those beggared by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo or to the ongoing negotiations with the United States on base rights, two question which most concerned the public.

Senator Maceda, along with Tatad the President's bitterest critic, in a long and detailed speech denied that her address portrayed the true state of the nation, saying that she could do the country a great favor by "declining to pursue the lacklustre leadership she had demonstrated." The real burden of Maceda's privilege speech in the Senate, however, was a long list of the deficiencies and failures of her government. Maceda's diatribe took up several columns, from which we select the following excerpts (*Newsday*, 7/24/91):

It is 300 municipalities without a doctor, and many more without a hospital.

It is the lack of water in so many parts of the country.

It is the continuing brownouts and the equally continuing increase in the cost of electricity.

It is the still unopened Kennon road and the unrebuilt earthquake damaged birdges of La Union and Pangasinan.

It is a Customs Commissioner admitting haplessness in blocking Kamag-Anaks (Cory's relatives) from backing syndicates in his bureau.

It is the chronic, pervasive and unabated corruption in every government office with Conrado Vasquez confirming that "not one big fish has been

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

convicted.”

It is the overpricing that ranges from billion peso Napocor electrical plants to P10 peso live plants for Malacañang.

It is David Castro hiring crooks after hallucinating on his conversations with the Blessed Virgin and buried treasure.

It is Kamag-anak, Inc. behind every money making operation or contract, with a string of banks acquired here and abroad.

It is the double standard of justice with Executive clemency being improvised for the protected Mariano U. Ocampo. (Tarlac Governor)

It is Gen. Aguirre vs. Gen. Abadia, and the factionalism in the Armed Forces.

Such caustic comment, in the opinion of Manila *Times*' Larry Sipin, (7/24/91) a faithful Cory adherent, was not only unfair but ungallant. He deplored all the Cory-bashing, noting that her speech of 42 minutes had been interrupted by applause 21 times. (Larry, like several others, always refers to Cory as *Tita* (Auntie):

... Tita concluded her speech thus—“As God is my witness, I honestly did the best I could . . . no more can be asked of any man” . . .

The Tita's goodbye got me right here (I'm pointing at my heart). As she delivered what was unmistakably a valedictory, I was feeling as if I was looking at Corazon C. Aquino for the last time.

August, 1991: *Rigor Mortis*

By August, 1991, with ten months left to run, the Aquino administration was in a state of *rigor mortis*. Even the most rational of observers could understand how large numbers of less sophisticated Filipinos could believe that Cory, like Marcos from August 1983, was *malas*. At a time when most Filipinos should be bubbling with excitement at the prospects of a new political contest, with its cornucopia of favors from politicians seeking the prize of office, there was torpidity, a sense of stasis, of hopelessness. Nothing sustained the administration in office but its possession and exploitation of the offices themselves. Not only the fury of the elements, but the utter fecklessness of those, beginning with Mrs. Aquino, who were charged with navigating the ship of state, encouraged dreams of piracy, which however, disintegrated in contemplating the choice of politicians who might replace the incumbents. They inspired less confidence than passivity or despair. No one had emerged with a clarion call to action, much less a program, or least of all, a vision with which Filipinos could identify. There was detectable a widespread but vague hope that *something would happen* to bring the sense of stagnation to an end. This was in spite of the undeniable recent success of Mrs. Aquino's regime in blunting the threats from the military on the right and hunting down the top leaders of the Communists on the Left, and more recently, a burst of fly-over road construction in Manila, turned to coincide with the election campaign. The mood was passive and despondent; the signs were that it would have welcomed some *force de frappe*, whether democratic or anti-democratic. Instead, it was obliged to witness the same old, tiresome

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

farce of an election in a hopelessly corrupted society. In many other countries, there would have been revolution. Here, it was probably only American support combined with the infinite patience of the ordinary Filipino, that preserved a crumbling structure. The time was ripe for a savior on horseback, but all that was on display were a half dozen orating Don Quijotes astride spavined Rosenantes.

Possibly—but only possibly—the return of Imelda Marcos could shake things up. Nothing has so paralyzed positive, substantive government action as Mrs. Aquino's commitment to the politics of revenge, which she had now formally forsworn in her State of the Union address. Yet her hold on the people's affection had so diminished that she feared the return of the discredited former ruler's corpse—a confession of weakness that would have escaped no one not bemused by the fantasy of an indispensable champion against the evils of a predecessor, however undistinguishable they were from those perpetrated by her own regime. The gridlock cried out for a change in American policy from total support for Mrs. Aquino to a policy of active encouragement of national consolidation and regeneration, whatever pain it might cause its shopworn former idol.

Some August Developments in the Presidential Campaign

A major development came in early August, when Senator Maceda announced that he favored Senator Estrada for President. This was interpreted as an indication that Maceda hoped to run the Presidency from the vice President's office, a dream that proved futile on Laurel's part when he gave up the Presidential nomination to Mrs. Aquino in order to run as her Number Two, only to be subsequently ignored and down-graded. The same would happen to Maceda, though he is perhaps the smartest politician in a country of smart politicians. The team was formidable, perhaps unbeatable at the polls. Estrada, the movie actor, is according to surveys, the most popular politician in the country, and Maceda, in addition to being a skillful politician, is no mean vote-getter himself.

Recognizing Estrada's drawing power, Danding Cojuangco, probably marginally the strongest *Nacionalista* in the forthcoming convention, might offer Estrada the vice Presidential slot denied him by the Liberal Party, but Maceda's bid, though not based on a party and a machine, might tempt a gambler. Moreover, Estrada knows that the talk of a switch to the parliamentary system after the election has substance, and this move would abolish the vice President's office.

The conventional wisdom has been that only a united opposition, with one candidate, can best the government's party, supported by Cory Aquino. Still, if the Liberals, as expected, nominate the Protestant Senate President Salonga, it might draw as many votes from NGO enthusiasts supporting the government party's candidate as from the *Nacionalistas*. Miriam Defensor Santiago, with Estrada the two most popular choices for President, has no party, but might be able to swing some voters to her last-minute choice.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

The Supreme Court decision that the local and national elections must be held simultaneously means that only a major party can field the hundreds of officials necessary in such an election. There are only three parties capable of such a feat: the LDP (Aquino), the *Nacionalistas* (Laurel, Enrile, Cojuangco), and, perhaps, the Liberals (Salonga).

Imelda Marcos, if she arrives in time, would have the money to make a difference in the *Nacionalista* convention, and she favors Laurel. In the election, her funding, unless supplemented by Japanese subventions, would hardly be decisive. Cojuangco and Enrile could finance themselves, while Mitra and Ramos will both look to the government and the Chinese for financial support. The only sure thing is that the 1992 election will be far and away the most expensive in history, and will bankrupt the government but finance a brief consumer buying boom.

A Clerical Party is Formed

During the first Sunday in August, a pastoral letter read in every Catholic parish announced that the Church would be organizing "down to the precinct level" to contest the 1992 Presidential election on behalf of its candidates (to be selected later as those most likely to serve honestly and competently). The Church, as Rama (*Panorama*, 9/18/91) reminded his readers, was unquestionably the country's "biggest, most powerful and most ubiquitous organization, antedating all organizations and parties." Heretofore, the Church had respected the principle of the separation of church and state introduced by the Americans. By its Pastoral Letter, it in a sense returned to the centuries-old Spanish tradition in which church and state were united. This major and perhaps most portentous change resulted from a finding, after fervent discussion among the Bishops, that the church had lost its relevance by its failure to convert the country's politicians to political behavior which would be just and honest, and above all, assure that the poor should receive the equality of treatment promised them by the Philippine constitution.

The Bishops and the Cardinal were thus saying that Mrs. Aquino, who had enjoyed the Church's blessings and had been personally anointed by Cardinal Sin himself, had failed ("Poor Cory. She did her best," was the Cardinal's comment), and it was necessary, despite the danger that outright political activity might threaten the Church's ultramontane goals, was about to become in all but name a political party. It would now not be content to bless and anoint; it would select candidates and urge the faithful to vote for its choices.

The disquiet of the priests with the failure of the Aquino government to give relief to the poor, and to provide essential public services or to administer them honestly, had finally transformed the Church Evangelical into a Church Militant, and it was surely significant that the decision was reached just after President Aquino had been obliged to appeal personally to the Bishop of the non-Catholic Iglesia ni Kristo to reverse its call to its legions or disciplined followers (esti-

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

mated at a potential million plus from Manila and surrounding provinces) to support the general strike which radical unions had called to protest fuel prices. Mrs. Aquino, the Cardinal's anointed, had been forced to appeal to the Bishop of a non-Catholic (and, arguably, *anti*-Catholic) sect to spare the capitol the disorders which she feared might, with the intervention of either or both military and communist rebels, overthrow her government.

The AFP Weighs in on the Bases Issue

In what appeared to be a clear threat to the Senate not to reject the treaty negotiated by Foreign Minister Manglapus and Special Negotiator Armitage, a shoal of AFP generals (reportedly 59) met at vice President Laurel's after learning that a straw vote in the Senate had showed sixteen Senators opposed and only one in favor of the agreement. They deplored the Senate attitude, pointing out that the vitally-needed modernization of the AFP was wholly dependent on the adoption of the agreement, as under its provisions, United States was pledged to render the necessary assistance.

News of this meeting Teddy Benigno attributed to sleuthing by his publisher Max Soliven, but it was obviously in the interest of the meeting's participants to leak the information of its implied warning to the legislators to shape up or be shipped out. Benigno (*Star*, 8/14/91) wrote that the Generals who had attended the soiree met at the vice-President's

to signal their displeasure at the Senate straw vote. To put it simply, the Senate was put on notice there could be no elections in 1992 if it fooled around with the bases treaty.

Just how much of a hand the US had in that night of the generals with Doy Laurel is best left to speculation.

Still, Benigno make it plain that he had never taken much stock in the Americans' oft-repeated assurances that when and if they were asked to leave, they would silently fold their tents and depart. Moreover, and more important, the AFP "would lose all the marbles it needs to modernize."

Equally interesting was Benigno's assumption that Washington had finally given up on Cory Aquino:

The critical support base of President Corazon Aquino has cracked wide open. My surmise is that official Washington will shed not a single tear if she can't get the Senate to ratify the treaty and if as a result her administration is done in by a constitutional coup.

Benigno's asserted loss of Washington support had encouraged the military to threaten the Senate with extinction:

In baring its teeth by coming out in force at the Laurel residence, the military apparently has a knife at the throat of the Senate. So, just for sheer survival, the likelihood is the Senate will approve the treaty.

Whether the President's heart was in the fight for approval of the treaty or not, she apparently recognized the fact that she risked being made dispensable if she failed to act, so she was forced to abandon her dearly-cherished "options open" strategy. She was therefore making speeches in its favor as well as inviting

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

individual Senate hold-outs to the Palace to plead for its passage.

Treaty Extending Bases Leases Signed

Newly-arrived U.S. Ambassador Frank Wisner may have heaved a sigh of relief when on August 27 he signed, with Philippine Foreign Minister Manglapus, a treaty extending for ten years the lease on the Subic Naval Base, but he was probably unaware (assuming the Senate could be brow-beaten to concur), of how quickly and how voracious Philippine claims on U.S. assistance would pyramid in its wake. That he was spared this experience was an important, if neglected, benefit of the Senate's later rejection of the treaty. The Filipinos have persuaded themselves not only that as usual, they were short-changed, but that the U.S. is responsible for their economic troubles. They would now insistently demand concessions amounting to reparations in every forum in which the Bush administration might be assumed to wield an influence. In fact, a demand for debt relief, "similar to the special concessions given to Poland, Egypt, Bolivia and Jamaica by multilateral financial institutions," along with special assistance in meeting the need for reconstruction caused by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, was forwarded to Mrs. Aquino by the Philippine Senate for transmission to President Bush. The implication was that failure to act positively on either of these requests would result in the rejection of the treaty by the Senate.

One voice, certain to be drowned out by others of a contrary persuasion, dared to point out that those actually responsible for the country's failed economy were the Filipinos themselves. Rodolfo Romero wrote in the *Bulletin* (8/29/91):

Opponents of the new MBA, which was signed the day before yesterday, are saying that the \$203 million that the U.S. has offered to pay the Philippines annually for use of the bases constitutes humiliation for this country and that the Philippines would be comporting itself like a mendicant were it to accept the offer. Better a nation full of pride and free of foreign forces, they say, than one that behaves like a beggar and accepts every mess of pottage offered by the U.S. . .

The truth of the matter is that the U.S. is in no way responsible for the economic weakness that characterizes the Philippines today and that the mendicancy of which the MBA's critics speak is attributable to the people of this country and to no one else. Through a combination of unsound economic policies, bad public administration and waste of opportunities, the Filipino people have themselves prevented the achievement of the degree of economic development that would have (1) enabled the Philippines to enter the MBA negotiations from a position of relative strength and (2) obviated the rise of all talk about a mendicancy-type negotiating stance.

It was totally safe to predict that the Senators' demand for debt relief was only the first of claims covering every aspect of Philippine-American relations: trade, immigration, financial assistance, defense modernization, not forgetting the repeatedly-rejected omnibus claims that go back to World War II. President Bush's "side letter" to President Aquino, specifying the nature of additional assistance contemplated, will be scrutinized minutely not only for what may be

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

claimed directly or implied under its terms. Philippine expectations will not be limited to what appears therein. Anything that is missing and wanted in the Philippines will be justified in the name of the niggardly compensation tendered for the use of the base, as well as the accompanying treaty of friendship, cooperation and security. It could be predicted that Ambassador Wisner would be surprised to discover how broadly the Filipinos would interpret its terms with respect to United States obligations and how narrowly those undertaken by the Philippines.

Still, it was unlikely that the Ambassador would be willing to speak as frankly as Elliott Richardson, heading up the PAP, who was quoted as saying publicly that the results of how earlier money was spent weren't evident:

Richardson even added that unless a proper explanation is made, further aid may be jeopardized.

Richardson isn't about to make such public statements unless there was a previous attempt on his part to get explanations in private. Most likely, he was unconvinced by the explanations offered by the Aquino government. The implication of the Richardson questions is that the money was wasted, possibly through corruption. (Chanco, *Chronicle*, 10/21/91)

When it was announced a few days later that the U.S. commercial banks had offered \$1.5 billion in debt relief, the response was tepid, and a *Newsday* commentator (9/4/91) protested bitterly:

Opposition to the bases treaty has so far focused on the meager compensation. . . But the defects of the treaty go beyond the inadequate compensation.

For example, we are told that the term of the treaty is ten years. But this is not what is written in the document. The US forces will not be out at the end of the 10th year. They will only start pulling out at the end of the tenth year. . .

The first reason we wanted to treaty, not just an executive agreement, was so that whatever commitment the US makes in return for the continued use of the bases would be a fixed and firm commitment of the entire US government, not just the "best efforts" pledge of the US president.

It was futile to call attention to the inaccuracies in the columnist's reaction. At bottom, it was less a complaint against the United States than a wail of frustration at the weakness of the Philippines, of the low state to which the numerous failures of its government, in combination with natural disasters, that have reduced the country to mendicancy and deprived it of any power to bargain. Whether the agreement was rejected or approved, the wounds opened by the hard-ball negotiating tactics of the Americans are not likely to heal within the foreseeable future.

Senate Rejects U. S. Bases Treaty

If the public debate had been stormy before the treaty went to the Senate, it rose to a crescendo following its rejection on September 16 by a majority, 12 to 10. Nationalists were jubilant, even ecstatic, while the treaty's supporters, including President Aquino, a last-minute recruit, were reduced to hand-wringing

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

by the unexpected reversal. Until the vote, the arguments had centered around overcoming the objections of at least one of the only nine Senators reported as opposed to the bill in order that it could be approved by a 2/3 majority. The facts were that the treaty had been badly mishandled by the Palace and by Foreign Secretary Manglapus, both of whom seemed far more interested in their public images than in securing approval of the treaty. It was difficult to determine whether the President or the Foreign Minister had suffered the most from the defeat, and President Aquino's action in sending off, post-haste, three of her Senators to reassure Washington that some of the nasty things said about the United States were really not representative of Philippine opinion, lost the Palace support even among her own bitter-enders.

Amid the torrent of press reactions, the most sensible analysis of what had happened was one by the AP's Robert Reid (*Bulletin*, 8/28/91), who pointed his finger at Mrs. Aquino's characteristic failure to lead opinion, though he acknowledged that the Philippine political culture had also contributed to the fiasco. In addition to "the litigious nature of the Filipinos, defeat reflected the style of Mrs. Aquino":

Rather than seizing the initiative in consensus-building, Mrs. Aquino prefers to let others take the lead in moulding public opinion.

Once a consensus emerges, she adopts it as the "will of the people." For all the talk on American television about mustering "people power" for Subic, Mrs. Aquino has launched no nationwide speaking tour on behalf of the installation.

In contrast, the reaction of the public was more to admit that the "Press Debate has exhausted the Nation" (*Chronicle*, 9/17/91), and to plead for a return to other subjects: "Let us Get on With Other Matters" (Alejandrino, *Chronicle*, 9/20/91).

The longer-term consequence of the brouhaha were not easy to predict. Mrs. Aquino, who had clearly been tempted to seek last-minute support via a referendum (an initiative that only Max Soliven supported in the end), was the big loser, revealing the utter futility of her fumbling efforts to mount a last-minute offensive. Her faithful supporter in *Mr. and Ms.*, No Novela, wrote sadly:

These vacillating stance (sic) of the President has again drawn fire from her critics and even from some supporters who view it as typical of her indecisiveness.

A bitter critic of the President, Niñez Cacho-Olivares, in the *Inquirer* (9/21/91), lashed her for trying to toady to the Americans:

Almost immediately after the Senate officially rejected the treaty, Aquino chose to announce idiotic policy changes before the American audience instead of the Filipino public. Her reason? She claims that she had to "smooth the ruffled feelings of the American people", the preponderant majority of whom can't care less about the fate of Subic base in the country. But she tells the "ruffled" Americans that the Senate vote is not yet final. . .

And, through her spokesman, Aquino arrogantly dares anyone in Congress to impeach her. And she insults Congress by saying that Congress does not have the numbers to impeach her. The Lower House, which initiates impeachment proceedings, always does her bidding.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

That is how little she thinks of the entire Congress, a co-equal and independent branch of government, under her much-violated Constitution.

Still, some of the most crushing blows came from Cory's faithful knight Teddy Locsin (*Free Press*, 8/14/91) against Bishop Ted Bacani who had played such an active, if profane, role in the People Power revolution that brought Cory to power. He had come out in favor of the treaty, dismissing the prostitution and moral evils that the bases spawned, while Alex Magno in the *Chronicle* (8/19/91) called the President's behavior "a case of irresponsible child's play":

We are now forced to bear painful witness to Corazon Aquino at her stubborn worst and a Presidency that seems to have run amuck.

Last week, the President of the Republic hired a mob, named it "people power" and marched it to the Senate like some farcial reenactment of the siege on the Bastille. At the head of this mob was a Catholic bishop who threatened anti-treaty senators with eternal damnation, a wild preacher resurrecting the anticommunist witchhunts of yore and a group of cheap entertainers claiming heroism for offering their song-and-dance routines for free.

Defanging the RAM and the YOU

The busiest man in town as the Senate debate roared to its conclusion was Mrs. Aquino's new AFP Chief of Staff, General Lisandro Abadia, who was sending peace missions to the Army's chief rebel opponents, Gringo Honasan of RAM and the irreconcilables of the YOU (Young Officers Union). They seemed to be coalescing, or perhaps more accurately described, the YOU was swallowing the RAM and giving it a more radical flavor. Some of the well-known RAM representatives accepted the government's olive branch, but others, including Honasan and Kapunan, were still out (but available to selected reporters).

The sweet-talk was rudely interrupted by the accusation of Ross Terrell, the American mercenary, who charged, over Ted Koppel's ABC program in the United States, that he had been contracted by Foreign Minister Manglapus to assassinate Honasan. No one was ready to believe Raul was guilty of arranging an assassination, but his appearance on T. V., intended to clear his name, was so unconvincing that the public remained convinced that though not guilty as charged, Manglapus was guilty of *something*.

Abaya and Chanco in the *Chronicle*, on the same day (10/21/91), wrote:

If Manglapus was guilty of anything, it was of having been naive enough to negotiate with a man of dubious credentials like Terrell over a highly sensitive issue like neutralizing—but not necessarily killing—leaders of the RAM and the Opposition. Terrell probably came highly recommended by Manglapus' contacts in the US government, and that could be an interesting story in itself. (Abaya)

It would have been much easier to maintain the initial reaction of disbelief if only Mr. Manglapus was more convincing in his denials. When the ABC tape was finally shown on local television, it showed a nervous Manglapus answering the ABC reporter's question. That's the thing with television. It is not just what you say but how you look while saying it. (Chanco)

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Fallout Effects of Treaty Rejection on Presidential Contenders

The one most damaged by the treaty's failure in the Senate was President Aquino, who lost the last shreds of her dignity as well as public confidence as a result of her dithering. Senate President Salonga won additional support from the nationalists, but gained few additional votes; indeed he may have lost some, since the vast majority of Filipinos is more job-oriented than nationalistic. Salonga is also a Protestant in a Catholic community. Mitra probably improved his poor prospects by moving in the direction favored by his soldier son, and by showing some of the leadership so absent at the Palace. Chanco wrote knowledgeably of Mitra in the *Chronicle* (9/26/91):

The story has it that Monching's soldier son had in the months following the last coup, grown more and more sympathetic to the "cause" of the idealistic younger officers of the Armed Forces. It was such that a gap had reportedly started to develop between father and son. The son, like many young officers, started to show impatience with the ways of our politicians.

As such, Monching has a first-hand view of the sentiments in the rank and file of officers of the Armed Forces. The problems of unifying the military behind the Constitution and civilian rule has a personal ring to Monching beyond his ambition to be president.

Monching has [also] displayed his ability to be some kind of a "crisis fix-it" type of leader. He worked on the Iglesia Ni Cristo to abandon their plans to rally some weeks back in relation to fuel prices. And negotiating with rebels is nothing new too. Monching was head of the government panel that negotiated with the communist rebels in 1986.

Among the *Nacionalistas*, Danding Cojuangco handled himself skillfully with a hostile September interviewer from the *Manila Times*, rejecting debt repudiation ("we mustn't be welchers") but leaving room to negotiate downward the national debt. He rejected charges he was a monopolist. Speaking of his San Miguel Brewery holdings, he objected:

I still don't control it. I still don't own it. I still vote with only three directors. I might be the single biggest stockholder, but that does not mean I control it. And what privileges did I get which were not available to the others?

On the coconut industry:

Whatever they call it today, the fact is during the time we were associated with the industry, it brought into the country \$1.8 billion. Now, we can't hardly make \$500 million. Because we don't have any say anymore in the determination of our selling price. During my time, it was different.

Danding did not think that being a Marcos crony would on balance hurt him, and he said he had nothing to reconcile with his cousins (Cory and Peping); where they disagreed was on who should lead the country. On economic policies, he favored concentration on agriculture. On the treaty, he said that having been rejected by the Senate, it would be *pangit* (ugly) to request renegotiation, but he did not reject renegotiation if proposed by the U.S.

Vice President Laurel, who believed himself to be Imelda's choice, tried to avoid criticizing the rejection of the treaty, but had earlier suggested a com-

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

promise between the Philippine and American positions, while a late-issued press release (*Bulletin*, 11/5/91) reminded readers that Juan Ponce Enrile had in the Aquino years built a “vast business empire, tripling assets to P1.5 billion in five years”. What is interesting about this juxtaposition is that Laurel cannot himself finance a presidential race, but Cojuangco can, and the press release is equivalent to a statement that Enrile can also afford it. Imelda can lobby on behalf of Laurel for the Nacionalista nomination, but she can’t make him win. As of Oct. 1991, in the President’s party, Ramos led Mitra, but as a Protestant, was probably unelectable. If Imelda sits on the sidelines and successfully finances Laurel’s candidature, he will almost certainly lose to the President’s party, whether Cory resists Peping Cojuangco’s entreaties to run again or supports, say, the unexciting Supreme Court Justice Fernan or the media’s darling, Oscar Orbos. Miriam Santiago and Joseph Estrada, despite their popularity, both lack a national organization, which is indispensable. It was thought that if Imelda ran, she would probably succeed only in re-electing Cory, despite her discredited regime and person. If issues rather than personalities counted, Imelda would back Danding, who would then win handily in a three-or four-cornered race.

So, on the eve of Imelda’s return, the presidential derby probably had not less than three candidates ready and able to finance a costly campaign: one from the presidential party (Ramos? Mitra? Fernan? Cory?), at least two of three *Nacionalistas* (Cojuangco? Laurel? Enrile?) but not including Santiago and Estrada, the most popular choices. Imelda could finance a fourth (Herself? Laurel?).

Another Act of God? The Ormoc, Leyte Flood

The electoral campaign was interrupted for a day or two by a disaster which if it had occurred in the U.S. or Europe or Japan, would not only have produced agonies of public mourning but sent various public officials into jail or oblivion. In the Philippines, the loss of 8,000 lives in a flood at Ormoc, Leyte during the first week in November was briefly deplored in newspaper columns, solemnized in perfunctory church services, and then forgotten as public interest returned to the campaign. Their religion is a great comfort to the Filipinos: they can ascribe any of their own failings to impersonal forces or the Almighty, though why 8,000 lives should be snuffed out as a divine punishment defied reason. (Voltaire was confirmed in his atheism by a similarly lethal earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal). When the *Doña Paz* sank with a loss of 3,000 lives, the guilty officials—the maritime authorities, the weather bureau and the shipowners—were briefly chastized, there were even small public and private payments to the victims’ families, and then the survivors were left to mourn. Everyone who shared in the guilt pointed to others, and were absolved by both State and Church. Exactly the same thing occurred in the Ormoc calamity that claimed more than twice as many victims. No one admitted one iota of responsibility, and not a single resignation of a government official occurred.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

The evasion of responsibility by officials was even easier than in the case of the *Doña Paz*, since an investigative task force was quickly formed under the chairmanship of Ricardo Gloria of the Department of Science and Technology, a man of good reputation. He identified several reasons for the disaster which taken together, so spread responsibility that no persons or offices could be identified as guilty of sins either of commission or omission. Again it was apparently God's fault. The DOST (*Newsday*, 11/26/91) even preened itself on its investigation as an

"objective, neutral, doesn't care who gets hurt" report on the killer flood, which points to three major causes: the unusually high concentration of rainfall of tropical storm "Uring", insufficient forest cover and a high tide; and sloping configuration and the deep crevices of the Ormoc City watershed, which had areas where flood waters converged.

Forgiveable mistakes, accordingly to Gloria, *had* occurred:

The Department of Agrarian Reform has been giving titles for lands in the watershed without the permission of the mayor of Ormoc City. This, he said, had been taking place even 10 to 15 years ago, and confirmed that such was a case of land "misuse". DOST Secretary Ceferino Follosco also said watershed areas should not be planted to agricultural crops, except fruit trees. He also confirmed that logging was rampant in the area many years ago, although the reforestation aspect was neglected. . .

the main flooded area was between the two rivers, and the bridge over the Anilao River which collapsed caused a damming effect, thus sending waters into the area. Follosco noted the bridge's location at the bend of the river was impractical and dangerous."

Pictures showed that bulldozers had shoveled large number of the victims into a mass grave. Thousands of bodies were unidentified or disappeared into shark-infested coastal waters.

Filipinos were united in their judgement: it was "an act of God."

Imelda's Homecoming (without the body)

Imelda's return was briefly a media triumph, which the Palace, after a few days, felt obliged to restrain through media directives to limit favorable references to her appearances and to emphasize the graft cases being filed against her. She was also acclaimed loudly and enthusiastically by the vastly shrunken ranks of Marcos Loyalists and by a mass turnout of her special clients, the Manila squatters and urban poor, who had not forgotten the solicitude she had shown them in the past. It was in fact an Isabel Peron extravaganza, and like Isabel, Imelda was grossly misled by the turnout and reports by her largely imported staff to be the public's favorable reaction to the rumors she would run for the Presidency, despite the opposition of her family (who had followed their mother home) and anti-Cory Opposition leaders. They were certain that the effect would be to re-elect a shopworn Cory Aquino and her do-nothing, morally-bankrupt government, since hostility to Imelda ran deep, and particularly motivates a large number of influential people who would otherwise do

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DISASTERS

all in their power to rid themselves of the current regime. Most commentators emphasized the financial stake of the Presidential family in their acquisitions after the Marcoses' flight ("Kamag-anak, Inc."—Relatives, Inc.) but powerful as those motivations were on the part of the family, the one thing that could reanimate the enthusiasm of those who constituted the urban vote-rich People Power movement which elected Mrs. Aquino would be the threat of a Marcos restoration. Concerning Imelda's preferred vice-Presidential running mate, the most interesting prediction was one by Olivares-Cunanan (*Inquirer*, 11/10/91) that she had sent a message to Senator Maceda to "give her Estrada", who still topped the popularity polls, to run as her vice-President.

Mrs. Marcos moved about the city and the country, trying to reenact her role as Good Samaritan, including the sites of tragedy such as Pinatubo and Ormoc, and even reluctantly reorganized her staff, responding to bitter media criticism that she was being fed unreliable information by an untalented, out-of-touch group of sycophants. Imelda accepted all invitations, whatever the reputations of their sponsors, but did not open her purse. Several legal cases were hurriedly filed against her in the courts in order to beat the Swiss deadline for recovery (if the government should win its cases) of the hidden Marcos plunder banked there, but the betting in Manila was that the government's lawyers (who enjoy little popular esteem) would lose their cases.

If Imelda could be kept out of the race, the smart money was betting that anyone with an organization would beat Cory, who continued to assert that she would not be a candidate to succeed herself, even including an out-of-character performance at the Palace, singing "I'll never run again". Most sophisticated Filipinos believed she would not run only if she had a likely winner to support. Speaker Mitra, despite Palace intrigues intended to favor Ramos, Cory's unproclaimed candidate, had won the government party's nomination. At this stage, of all the reputable journalists, Max Soliven (*Star*, 12/8/91) assessed the government and Cory personally the most critically:

For five long years, the Cory administration dithered and dallied. The former Public Works and Highways secretary even left that post with almost P4 billion left unspent in his department's budget, allegedly because he "feared" that rushing projects would leave him wide open to charges of graft and corruption. His successor resorted to only cursory repairs, mainly consisting of the *tapal* system. (During this period, a group of favored contractors known as the *Pajero* Gang inexplicably became rich and infamous.) In the meantime, the Department of Transportation and Communications talked grandly of a new "Light Rail Transit" (LRT), Part II, and even of a "fast-tracked" EDSA LRT setup. Not one meter of new LRT line was ever added during the entire Cory regime. . .

Ah, but Malacañang says: "We have restored democracy!" *Sanamagan!* Is this what democracy means? Bad roads. No water (or in floodtime, too much water, but outside the faucet). No electricity. No telephones (that work). No jobs. No safety. No money. No investment. No dice.

The only things we have in surplus are speeches, court suits and cases, and a mountain of promises (more towering than Smokey Mountain. [Manila's refuse dump.])

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

End of an Era: The American Bases Shut Down

On November 26, Clark Field's ash-covered facilities were closed by its caretakers, and both the Philippine and American press featured pictures of lowering the American flag at Clark. How much benefit the Philippine Government would derive from this abandoned installation was dubious, as conversion planning and legislation had run far behind events, and looters (mainly its soldier guards) had already seized all of the base's movable assets.

Only a month later, U.S. Ambassador Frank Wisner and the Philippine government announced that Subic Naval base would also be de-activated and its personnel would depart before December 31, 1992. Ambassador Wisner had quietly warned in advance that his on-going negotiations with the GOP to keep Subic operational for three years might not be successful, as the Filipinos were insisting on specific dates for different aspects of the removal, threatening the base's operational capacity. Since the news broke during the Christmas holidays, media reaction was delayed, but when it burst, the government was met by a chorus of disapproval of its performance. Rama (*Panorama*, 1/19/91) condemned pique;

There was something unreal to the negotiations. One explanation is that there had been so much bad blood, unnecessary boorishness during the original treaty talks and during the Senate debate that the withdrawal negotiations could no longer be insulated from the old spite and pique. ("You could see and feel the hate for the Americans radiating from the face of a negotiator on the Philippine panel," observed a US panelist.) The basic strategy of the leftists on the original panel to irritate the Americans out of the bases seems to have paid off.

Chapter XVI

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS OF THE SAINT TURNED SINNER

In January 1992, darkness descended on most of Mindanao, while power outages increased across the nation. A frightening power shortage also threatened in Luzon when President Aquino finally acquiesced in public demands that she dismiss the officers of the grossly-mismanaged National Power Corporation, which though all its officers' many perks were still in place, faced revolts from the residents of new coal-burning stations in Luzon, and a power line in Mindanao was blown up by those who feared the loss of irrigation water to be stored for hydroelectric power. A government decision to increase power rates sharply had ignited protests in Manila, where the poor were being subjected to inexorably rising prices, and the ever-present smugglers were frustrating the efforts of an unusually honest Bureau Chief of Internal Revenue. The NPA was attacking the AFP, and the latter's proud boasts that it had the NPA's on the run and the RAM/YOU broken up, sounded hollow. The return of exported capital to finance the most expensive election campaign in the Philippines' history was helping to keep the Philippine peso strong though the Congress refused to pass even revenue-*enhancing* (no new taxes) increases. As a final humiliation, a leading American business executive, Michael Barnes of the nation's geo-thermal power corporation, was kidnapped, sending more unfavorable signals to foreign investors. This outrage, along with the predictable post-election collapse in the peso's value, threatened any incoming administration that might survive the feared election violence.

The Campaign in January 1992

The government coalition, the LDP, had broken into two parts as Mrs. Aquino, defying the party convention which had selected House Speaker Mitra, anointed General Fidel Ramos as her choice. The *Nacionalistas* were split three ways, and there were signs that the small Enrile/Tolentino group might join with the Mitra LDP's. Only the small Liberal Party, which had survived a threat of rupture when supporters of ex-Chief Justice Ferman tried to seize the party for their candidate, remained more or less undivided. The two most popular candidates, Senator Estrada and Miriam Santiago, lacked a party, but both insisted that they would refuse anything but the Presidency.

1992 would be the nation's most unpredictable election, testing a wide variety of hypotheses which will probably make it a subject of masteral theses and doctoral dissertations for years to come. It is *not* the first election to be contested by more than one party or one almost certain to be won by a plurality. In 1957, following Magsaysay's death in an airplane crash, vice President Garcia won by a plurality over Yulo, Manahan and Recto. The election will, however, shed light on some hotly-disputed questions. Did the discredited

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

President Aquino retain any residual influence? What is the importance of party machinery relative to (a) the government's pork-barrel and (b) personal popularity? How many votes can be delivered by political kingpins such as Bishop Manalo of the Iglesia ni Kristo or the provincial warlords? How great an influence has the Catholic Church (and how great a political handicap is being a Protestant?) How many votes can money buy, directly or indirectly? Can the NGO's, the non-governmental voluntary organizations, be mobilized effectively as an electoral base? What efforts will the foreign powers (U.S., Japan, the Europeans, the Chinese) to favor one of the candidates? (Contrary to popular fiction, the United States will *not* play a decisive role, but its favor could tip the balance in a field of four to six.)

Listing candidates roughly in order of their strength as of mid-January, the LDP, Ramos wing, perhaps enjoyed a slight edge over the LDP's Mitra/Enrile wing. Cojuangco, who potentially had the strongest machine in the country, was nearly as strong as Ramos or Mitra, despite his past weakness in public opinion polls. A Fernan ticket, backed by the Cardinal, should be a runner-up, assuming an all-out effort by the Church, but ex-Chief Justice Fernan would win few votes on his own. The Liberal Party's national organization was shallow, and a Protestant like Salonga (and Ramos!) was at a disadvantage, though the Left should offer some support.

Mrs. Marcos had money and the adoration of the squatters, but she was not electable, despite what her sycophants told her. Her significance is that she took votes from Cojuangco. Estrada would go nowhere, particularly since he had been abandoned by the Rasputin of Philippine politics, Senator Maceda. Miriam, ditto, who badly needed a Rasputin. Laurel was another also-ran; he didn't have the votes even if he received the blessings of the Comelec as NP leader. He would take few votes from Cojuangco. The talk of vice Presidents adding to the strength of their ticket is exaggerated; most are running on their own, and some are willing to desert their partymates. That is another reason why so few seek the job.

One possible institutional beneficiary of the multiplicity of parties contesting the 1992 elections was the Senate, despite its predicted disappearance in 1998. With so many parties offering a choice of candidates, it seemed likely that nearly all the Senators selected would have their own specific constituencies, rather than one all-powerful sponsor, as in 1986, when nearly half were simply Cory-annointed. This was true even though two of the best, Salonga and Paterno, would not be running. Several of the disappointed seekers of a party's presidential nomination, such as Miriam Santiago and Oscar Orbos, were good examples of fine, unutilized Senatorial material.

American Executive Michael Barnes Kidnapped

On January 17, Michael Barnes, American President of the Philippine Geothermal, Inc. was kidnapped by armed men as he arrived at his office parking lot,

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

a few doors from the U.S. Embassy's Thomas Jefferson Cultural Center. His company then sent a British expert on kidnapping negotiations to Manila, and for several weeks, contradictory reports were heard on who the kidnappers were and the ransom they demanded. (At one point P20 million, then 20 million *dollars* figured in the news.) The police favored the view that it was the Communist NPA rebels who were the culprits, but there were other theories, some accusing the RAM. For a time, the police gave out press releases, claiming clues, but a long period of silence then ensued.

Greenbacks Galore

The Philippines was awash with dollars. Importers were holding off ordering, hoping that a special import tax, urged by the IMF to pay for deficits in government accounts, might be modified or repealed, and millions of dollars were being repatriated to finance the campaigns of the presidential candidates. Not only Mrs. Marcos and Danding Cojuangco, the millionaires, were expected to spend lavishly. Mitra had the lucrative fruits of Speakership to dispense, Ramos vast government *largesse*, and several candidates had access to the Chinese millionaires, who were accustomed to being muled by candidates from whom they would later expect to obtain comparable favors. The peso increased in value; the dollar sank to 27 from 28 and would go to less than 26 in three months. The Aquino government was going more deeply into debt, but its international lenders were throwing good money after bad, counting on the traditional return to fiscal sobriety following the election.

The Campaign in February

After Mitra had defeated Ramos for the leadership of the government party (LDP), Mrs. Aquino not only failed to persuade ex-Chief Justice Fernan to become Ramos' vice-Presidential nominee in a new government party, but saw Fernan, in a deliberate snub, accept the number two position in Mitra's wing of the LDP. Whether the President had deliberately double-crossed Fernan, or simply been her usual vacillating self, was unimportant. She had seemingly marginalized her influence by her maneuvers, retaining only the inseparable prerogative of office—pork barrel, along with the threadbare symbolism of the aborted EDSA Revolution. The LP's, as expected, named Senators Salonga and Pimentel for President and vice President, and Estrada managed to find an obscure Macapagal LP, Vicente Rivera of Bulacan, as his number Two. Several strong Senatorial names joined his party as "guest candidates", as they defected from either the Mitra or Ramos wings of the LDP. Miriam Santiago still had no party, and got no vice-Presidential candidate to join her, despite her consistent topping of the public opinion polls. (Reliable, at most, only for Manila.) What was clear by Valentine's Day was that despite his low standing in the polls, Danding Cojuangco, who had single-handedly financed, organized, and was

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

dynamically leading a powerful convention political machine, might be the man to beat in the end. The starting aspect of this achievement was that his formidable machine had been assembled without major accretions of KBL strength, as Imelda Marcos had recaptured large elements of the old Marcos voting blocs.

The most significant predictive move was made by Senator Maceda, the country's #1 operator (Peping Cojuangco, Cory's brother is only #2, and Joe de Venecia, at that point a Mitra strategist, is #3) who joined Danding to head his Senatorial slated a testimonial which spoke eloquently of Maceda's own election forecast. Maceda was followed by Arturo Tolentino on Cojuangco's Senatorial slate, and by Congressman Frisco San Juan, an influential Rizal politician of good reputation, who defected to Danding from the NP camp, where Laurel bore the increasingly meaningless designation as the official *Nacionalista* party candidate. Ramos, professionally coiffed, coached and perfumed, looked more and more like a tailor's dummy and was less charismatic than ever (despite the featured cigar). Polls, however, showed he continued to hold substantial national support which Cory's sponsorship had not bettered. He looked less like a dynamic leader than any of the candidates, and he was a Protestant. Salonga, another Protestant, looked old and decrepit, but he still had the nationalist university youth as supporters. Mitra, the typical machine politician *par excellence*, had some charisma, but he was also marked as the country's #1 *trapo*, and *trapos* were currently in deep disfavor. By February 23, as this passage was being written, the author was inclined to rank Mitra, Ramos and Danding in that order, then Imelda, next Salonga, then Laurel. Estrada and Miriam, despite the potentiality of their high recognition factor and popularity, still seemed not electable. As evidence, no one was contributing heavily to their campaign.

The Palace couldn't be convinced that an attempt to re-ignite the spirit of EDSA was a pipe dream, and so was unable to realize that the gaudy repackaging of a Protestant General with European Socialist(!) backing was exposing him to ridicule. Cory was poised to stake everything on her awesome pork barrel, supplemented by a replay of the February 1986 Revolution on its sixth anniversary. Its miserable governing performance, however, was bound to convert the celebration into a welcome target for the Opposition, however divided. Under the circumstances, the instinct of the remaining Cory enthusiasts of 1986 was to concentrate their fire on Danding Cojuangco as an avatar of the fallen dictator. Led by the small circulation, intellectually high class *Manila Chronicle*, and its publisher Amando Doronila, who projects a high-domed hauteur, it featured Cojuangco as not only a Marcos crony but a Marcos clone (a theme less useful now that Imelda now Cojuangco's enemy), and insisted that the pre-Marcos Philippine democracy must be restored, which as theme is uninspiring, but an understandable media preference when one reflects that the Fourth Estate was never more powerful than in those pre-Marcos days.

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

Crime and Punishment in the Philippines

An issue of deep emotional content in the contemporary Philippines is the inability to convict and punish the perpetrators of murder if they are men of influence. When on February 12, murder suspect Rolito Go was granted bail by the Supreme Court (8-6), a public outcry was raised, since in the public's view, the wealthy accused was unquestionably guilty, and if released, would undoubtedly jump bail. Eight justices held that Go had been "rushed to trial" without a proper pre-trial hearing and must be freed. Six of their number far closer to public opinion, disagreed. Justices are lawyers, and the law prescribes a preliminary hearing. Police officials and the public, however, know that the strict application of the law repeatedly permits Filipino criminals to escape punishment.

This is not only an emotional issue; it is political, and it can affect the election, as is shown by Danding Cojuangco's decision to accept as a member of his Senatorial team Mrs. Hultman, the mother of the girl executed, gangster-style according to reliable witnesses, by her ~~lover~~ ^{friend} Claudio Teehankee. Mrs. Hultman is a one-issue candidate: she wants the death penalty restored. Under a Danding Cojuangco government, its restoration might or might not occur, but it should be understood that in a system of justice that consistently protects the strong at the expense of the weak, the public's reaction to the 8-6 verdict that upheld the letter of the law on Go was unpopular. Urban voters, particularly, are going to vote for or favor drastically stronger systems of justice (the most popular is a bullet in the head) for those whom the public sees as obviously guilty but protected by their wealth from punishment for their misdeeds.

The Resurgent NPA

General Abadia, whom Cory deep-selected to head the AFP in the last months of 1991, must have had much to recommend him, but he suffered nothing but failures in 1992. Brave talk of convincing all RAM/YOU dissidents and NPA's to abandon threats and violence against the government had been repudiated by those to whom it was addressed, and his boasts (an AFP speciality) that "he had the NPA's on the run" were soon revealed as hollow. After his claims had been denounced by Senator Maceda, Abadia sustained a shattering blow when the NPA in Surigao attacked and defeated an AFP unit, killing over forty officers and men, then mutilating their bodies without, apparently, absorbing any losses. Abadia, and indirectly President Aquino, thus suffered yet another serious loss of face. Predictably, the first AFP response was verbal: it would declare "total war". *Newsday* (2/22/92) then reported the government's military reaction:

The armed forces high command yesterday rushed reinforcement to Mindanao in the form of four MD helicopter gunships, two T-28 Tora-Tora fighting planes, and Huey helicopters.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

The forces were sent to Bancasi, Butuan City to augment the fighting capability of government troops tracking down the communist guerillas who ambushed a contingent of AFP troops last Saturday killing 43 officers and soldiers.

Mrs. Aquino once again had soothing but indignant words for the nation. It was clear that her chief concern was not her soldiers' deaths, but to reassure the world that her regime was in no danger. Face, as usual, was foremost:

In Malacañang, President Aquino said the ambush was a "desperation" attack by the NPA and the communist rebels were incapable of "massive" destabilization of the government, nor does it have the capacity to take over."

Mrs. Aquino also said the NPA was resorting to "savagery" and had "broken all the civilized rules of warfare by using children as combatants."

But Abadia's cup of humiliation was further refilled when the AFP was denounced by Amnesty International in London for serious human rights violations against unarmed peasants. The real tragedy was that after six years of Mrs. Aquino, no progress had been made in dealing with the insurgency. The NPA and AFP were locked in a war of reciprocal outrages, while the Palace either ignored the problem or wrung its hands.

The Sixth Anniversary of Edsa: A Flop

To celebrate its sixth anniversary, the Palace's drum-beaters strove, though listlessly, to revive the spirit of the People Power Revolution of 1986. The government's buses collected the faithful to appear at the points hallowed by memories, but despite yellow ribbons tied to fences and full-page advertisements, the President, perhaps deterred by widespread hostile predictions she would again disfigure a solemn occasion by attacking her opponents in the gutter language she had employed before, observed the occasion with apathetic dignity. Editorial reaction ranged from bitter criticism of her misgovernment to elegaic regret for neglected opportunities. With several of the most competent journalistic voices stilled because they were campaigning for Senator (Ople, Tatad), only Abaya rose to the occasion, all too generously offering Mrs. Aquino a bouquet for her early success but brickbats for her subsequent successive failures (*Chronicle*, 2/26/92). In the process, he recapitulated her regime's history. First, a mutiny and a fiesta:

Edsa was at best only a military mutiny that metamorphosed into a popular and largely bloodless uprising upon the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church.

Be that as it may, Edsa was nevertheless a unique historical experience that comes but once, if at all, in the life of a nation. Fortunate is the people who are inspired by their leaders to discover in the experience a sense of nationhood, a feeling that they belong to each other.

And woe to the people who, after the unconscious act of creating history, discover nothing, learn nothing, and distill nothing from their experience, because their leaders do not know what to make of that experience. . .

There was no attempt to formulate a political religion out of the historical experience. As far as President Aquino and her advisers then were concerned,

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

Edsa was literally a picnic and a fiesta that only incidentally overthrew a dictator.

Next, an invitation to Communists to join the government:

The only ones who tried to make political capital out of the event were the Radical Left, who deliberately tried to hijack the "revolution", even though they were eventually left out of what was essentially an elite and middle class revolt.

Working through sympathizers in the Cabinet who had the ear of a bewildered and all-trusting President, the Radical Left maneuvered to release from detention the captured leaders of the CPP-NDF-NPA, inserted Marxist advisers into Malacañang without her knowledge, and got her to bless a May Day (1986) march-past of KMU labor activists singing the "Internationale" and waving styrofoam replicas of the hammer-and-sickle.

No wonder the military got upset and nervous and staged coup after coup to try to unseat her, until she finally got the message and ultimately swung from Left to Right. . .

The regime was a revolution *manqué*:

Was President Aquino then a failure? In my opinion, no. President Aquino saw her historical mission as one of toppling the Marcos dictatorship and restoring the democratic institutions to their configurations in 1972, before Marcos disfigured them with martial law. And in the mission, President Aquino has been a roaring success. . .

President Aquino looked backwards towards 1972, to which she wanted to restore everything. The people of Edsa wanted to look into the future and waited for her to lead them into that future. And they waited in vain.

They waited in vain because President Aquino was not, is not, a political visionary, and never pretended to be one. . . For all her then 53 years, she never gave any thought as to how to organize society. . .

She was an unprepared President:

All of a sudden, by a fluke of her personal destiny, she found herself in a position of eminent power, which she never *coveted* and for which she was not prepared. And her reaction—the only reaction she could have reasonably been expected to make—was to look back into the familiar past, rather than forward into the murky future.

On this the sixth anniversary of Edsa, the last under President Aquino, we need to acknowledge her immense contribution in the restoration of our past political heritage, even as we must realize that the leader we elect in May must be one who can lead us into the future.

. . . Abaya's was a remarkably favorable, and in the writer's opinion, a far too generous evaluation, smacking strongly of gallantry. President Aquino had not brought about, but only presided over, a restoration of corrupted democratic institutions which sprang to life as soon as the Marcos government had fled. After the President's temporary capture by the Left (correctly set forth by Abaya), she repetitively ignored or double-crossed those who pointed out the high road (Jaime Ongpin, Chino Roces, Oscar Orbos), ignoring both the crooks among her cronies and relatives and the misfits charged with public responsibility, seeking advice and counsel only among her yea-sayers. She even failed her most powerful and faithful backer, the United States, not because she supported any moral principle, but because she shirked leadership. The United States had not backed the wrong horse in 1986, but one fit only for a quiet

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

canter, not a steeplechase. She had faltered at every barrier, and finally splashed into the middle of the climactic water jump, the military bases issue.

The Campaign in March (1-15)

The three most important developments during the first two weeks in March were (1) the formal launching of Miriam Santiago's reform party and her selection of the attractive Jun Magsaysay, President Magsaysay's son, as running mate; (2) the first campaign murder, and (3) the reduplication of the national campaign in the fight for Mayor in Manila, where seven of the eight parties endorsed their own Mayoral candidate. The Santiago announcement had been expected, but not her running mate. Jun Magsaysay was an winsome young man, not without some political experience as well as the bearer of a respected political name. His youth helped consolidate the impression that Santiago-Magsaysay was the party of youth, who statistically represent the generation with the largest voting potential. Whether the youth will vote as enthusiastically as it marches and cheers remained to be seen, but Santiago expected it, resurrecting a slogan from Cory Aquino's campaign in 1986, that if she did not win, she would have been cheated. On the other hand, Miriam was now talking too much, and losing some votes among those whose tolerance for long-windedness and cocksure answers to all problems was limited. There was also talk that she had spent time in a mental institution. Still, she and Jun now had to be accepted as among the four leaders.

Mayor Velasco of Ternate, Cavite, an interior town in a province long reputed for its violence was assassinated, along with his vice Mayor and security guards; the COMELEC promptly sent in the AFP to patrol the town, and Velasco's political enemy, Congressman Nuñez, was prevailed upon by his party to resign his Congressional seat, while talk circulated that Governor Remulla might also be involved.

For Mayor of Manila, Mitra's party selected Ramon Bagatsing, Mayor under Marcos; Miriam endorsed the country's most prominent lawman, General Alfredo Lim; General Ramos, Cory's anointed, picked Mel Lopez, the incumbent Mayor, who despite a record of hooliganism and the city's traditional reputation for backing an oppositionist, might win against six or seven opponents. Cojuangco chose Pablo Ocampo, a well-known Congressman with a favorable record but modest political strength. Mrs. Marcos, very strong in the capital city, whose Mayorship she herself might have won, picked little-known Reynaldo Fajardo. There was also Laurel's candidate Eduardo Figueras, who has run unsuccessfully for Mayor in the past, and former Manila vice Mayor Lacuna of Salonga's Liberal Party. Lim, Bagatsing and Lopez would fight it out in the end.

Nationally, the Cojuangco campaign was rolling, but the Ramos bandwagon seemed stalled by the candidate's own dour personality. Cunanan (*Inquirer*, 3/3/92) reported that the wives of two of the super-rich, Bea Zobel and Mercy

Tuason, were trying their best to breathe life into Cory's choice, but they found Ramos indecisive. Cunanan's colleague Larry Henares, on the same date, wrote that Ambassador Pelaez would return to blast Cojuangco as the author of his attempted assassination. The moralist Salonga, typically the only candidate to discuss the (family) morality of the candidates, asked Cory to identify the philanderers whom she had said were numbered among the candidates for president. (It would be easier to identify the exceptions—Cojuangco and Santiago.) But President Aquino was pouring out millions in government pork barrel (P35 million for Zamboanga alone; 42 million for the NGO's.) Ramos' strange interlude in Switzerland began to look like a Manglapus-engineered strategem to give Ramos the (chiefly moral) support of a European moderate socialist base, a mystifying gambit that might make some kind of sense in strengthening the candidacy of Manglapus himself, who is not running, but one that can contribute little or nothing to the candidacy of a General who is known to Europe only as a fallen idol's champion. A tabulation by Henares (*Inquirer*, 3/12/92) of the support allegedly held by the candidates Mitra, Ramos, Cojuangco and Salonga credited Mitra with 84 Congressman in his camp, Ramos 44, Cojuangco 29 and Salonga 16, a probably accurate count but with little predictive value, as Congressman and Governors are not the key players in a presidential campaign. It is the Mayors who count. Ramos claimed 600 out of 1000, including Manila and Cebu. (However, the vote in the biggest cities will be split seven or eight ways, while there are scores of towns where the Mayor delivers a near-unanimous vote for his candidate.) Henares' count on Mayors is unreliable, and not until after the election will it be clear whom the Mayors have supported. Henares wanted to be kind to Ramos: "his opponents are probably worse," but he couldn't resist characterizing Ramos as a blunt and faceless instrument, with an incompetent staff:

Christian Democrats came into being to preempt the Communists on socio-political issues. Eddie could have asked Raul Manglapus to draft a ringing manifesto on Land Reform and Social Justice, but he didn't. Eddie could have asked Lito Osmeña to draft a practical program for industrialization and economic development, but he didn't. He says that his "people empowerment" coincides with Raul's social justice and Lito's free enterprise, but that is not accurate. His specific views are more those of CRC Opus Dei than Raul or Lito.

His political organizers Rafael Alunan and Peter Tambucho Garrucho may have organized the SEA Games, but they are neophytes who never ran an election campaign. Everywhere unrecognized, they need to introduce themselves. His "military staff" are not flexible or knowledgeable.

During the second week in March, in a hammer-and-tongs T.V. debate, Laurel attacked Mitra as a *trapo* who accepted alleged contributions from his buddy, the Palawan logging tycoon (Alvarez) and alleged that he owned a dozen haciendas throughout the country. Admitting his crony Alvarez' funding, Mitra could retaliate only weakly by denouncing Laurel as the son of the pro-Japanese wartime President, Jose P. Laurel.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

More Fallout from the Removal of the Bases

Mayor Gordon of Olongapo was bitterly accusing President Aquino and the Congress of fiddling while Olongapo shriveled on the vine. He also attacked the Palace for its preference for Ambassador Melchor over himself as chairman of the agency for converting the base into a private facility. Meanwhile the U.S. Navy was shipping the three drydocks stationed at Olongapo one after the other to other U.S. bases—behaving “hard-heartedly”, according to a Palace spokesman. U.S. Ambassador Wisner was speaking kindly but sternly to the Filipinos, urging them to get their act together and to go after their share of world trade. He even spoke highly of President Aquino, though what she had done to deserve any compliment was unspecified. He was also dignified and convincing in an interview with the T.V. and newspaper columnist Louie Beltran, emphasizing the continuing importance of close U.S.-Philippine ties despite the departure of the bases. He skillfully sidestepped newspaper reports that he would soon leave for a Washington position. Ambassador Wisner was graciously setting the tone for a new but what he hoped would be a not less friendly stage in U.S.-Philippine relations.

International Donors Laud(?) Aquino Economic Policies

Meeting in Hong Kong, international donors pledged \$1.5 billion to tide the Philippine government over the transitional period from the Aquino government to its successor, but warned that the Philippines must take effective steps to promote economic reforms. A Reuter's dispatch (*Bulletin*, 3/14/92) strangely believed that the donors had “showered the President with rare praise for the success of economic reforms which have slashed inflation and opened up the economy.”

Elliot Richardson, head of the American delegation, was less inclined to credit the President with any of the improvement. His formulation was impersonal: “The government has done a remarkable job in meeting most conditions for macroeconomic reform. I think this is very well recognized and admired by everybody here”. The Reuter report continued by emphasizing that the economic policies of the government to come would be closely monitored:

... major donors [Japan, U.S. and EC nations] stressed that future aid commitments to the new government—Aquino will step down soon after the May 11 presidential election—will depend on strict adherence to the current path of tight government spending and continued liberalization of trade and foreign exchange controls.

It was announced that the donors would meet again in January 1993 to pass judgement on the policies of the new government.

Voter Motivation in the Philippines (March, 1992)

Never has a Philippine election been prepared with such care as in 1992. The

Looking for Ways Out



(Counter clockwise from top) Gringo Honasan is far from grim as he waves to reporters from ship to which he was confined after capture and appearance. Only the flag was stuck, but the picture symbolizes the Aquino government's search for ways out of its problems. Dirty tricks: candidate Syjuco taunts Binay, rival in Makati; with voter bag hand-out with "B" label. Forever Cory US Democratic Party Senators whoop it up for their favorite head of state, Senator Mecher urging the Philippines to ash for more money for continued use of the U.S. bases. Caption in Manila **Standard's** photo of Harry Stonehill's invited departure after quick visit, "Goodbye again, Harry" is ironic but good-natured, like Stonehill's expression itself.





Cory joins "Chino" Roces' wife and son at Chino's funeral.



Ramos explains crime statistics as Tatad listens.

*'These towns. . .represent
59% of all municipalities
in the country.'*

ELECTION - RELATED VIOLENT INCIDENTS 1971 -- 1988													
LEGEND: K - KILLED W - WOUNDED													
ELECTIONS	NR OF INCIDENTS	CASUALTIES										GRAND TOTAL	
		GOVERNMENT		TROOPS		OFFLS		CAND		SUPTRS		OTHERS	
		K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
198	3	1	1	2		27	52	21				57	27
198	4	11	14	6	5	4	26	31	22	31		104	83
198	296	10	11	27	1		54	94	82			141	53
198	918	77	49			4	1	5	144	19		154	70
198				36						29	19	108	55
												69	410
													905 629



(Top) President Aquino and her sister-in-law, Congresswoman Tessie Aquino-Oreta raise the hands of Cory's candidate for Malabon Mayor, in-law Peng Oreta. (Middle) Vice President and Mrs. Laurel check names for voting precinct. (Left) To travel in certain areas, an NPA safe conduct pass is necessary.

Cory's Handholders



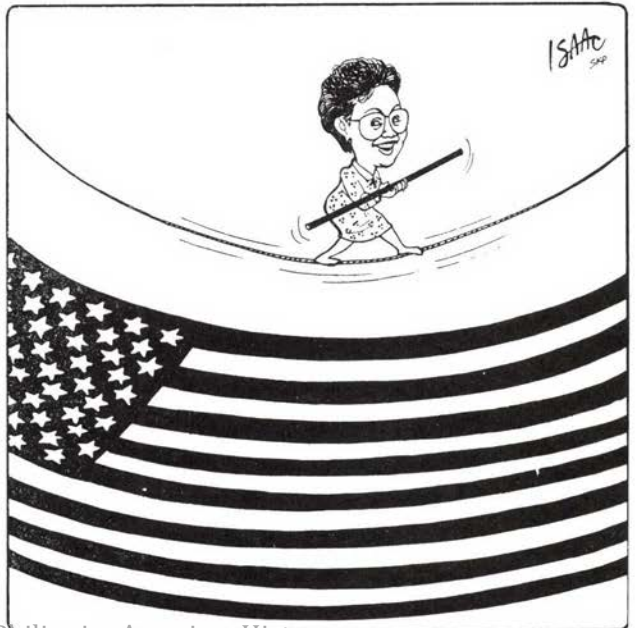
Counterclockwise from above: Undersecretary Armacost; Ambassadors of the EC and USSR. Below: Senator Estrada and Sister Dimaranan and Raul Roco pledge allegiance to anti-nuclear campaign.



The American Bases



Above: Street demonstrators prepare for more demonstrations with face masks that operate to protect from tear gas or police photographers. Center: Finger pointing by Ambassador Platt and Foreign Minister Manglapus fail to impress US. Admiral and Senator Maceda. Right: President Aquino practices high-wire act with American flag as safety net.

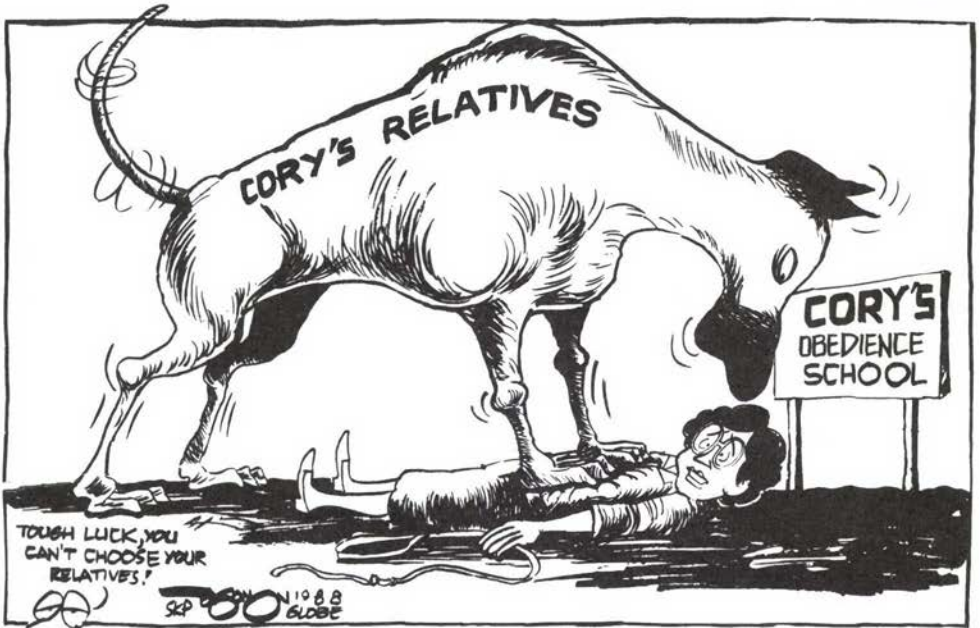




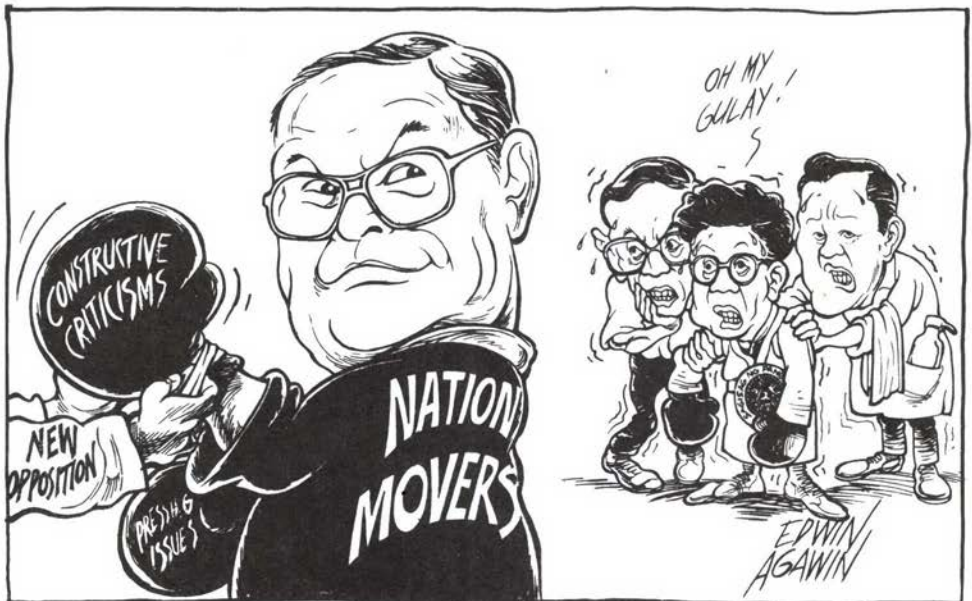
Author with Ambassador and Mrs. Platt.



Wishful thinking on the part of the cartoonist shows Manglapuz anchored in nationalism and Ambassador Platt helpless despite nuclear weapons.



The favorite theme of Cory's critics was the influence of her relatives. *Kamag-anak Inc.*



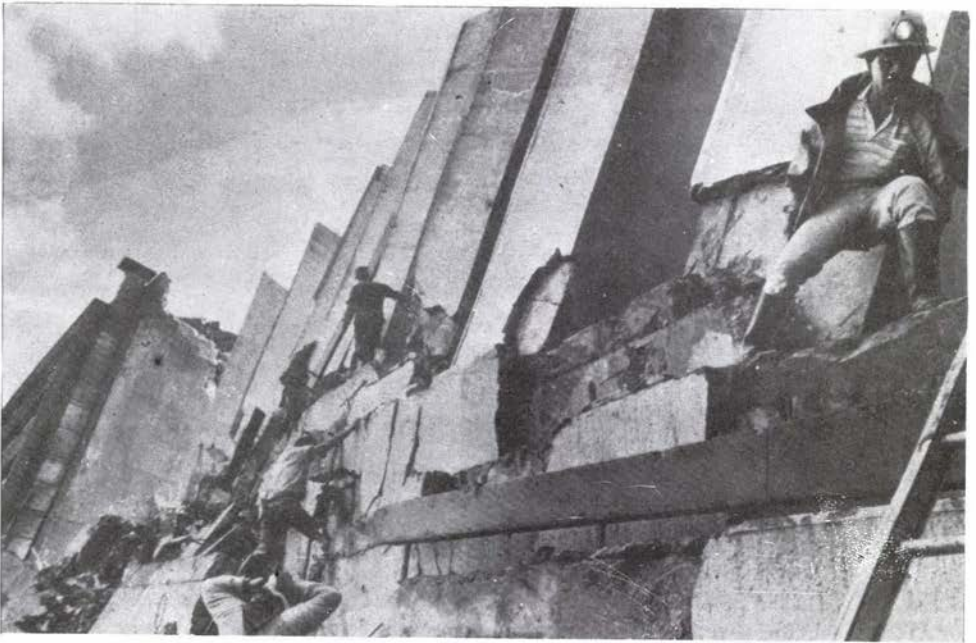
Aborted political movement headed by Enrique Zobel shows Cory frightened by the economic colossus.



Two cynical views of the government's clamor of victories against the NPA's

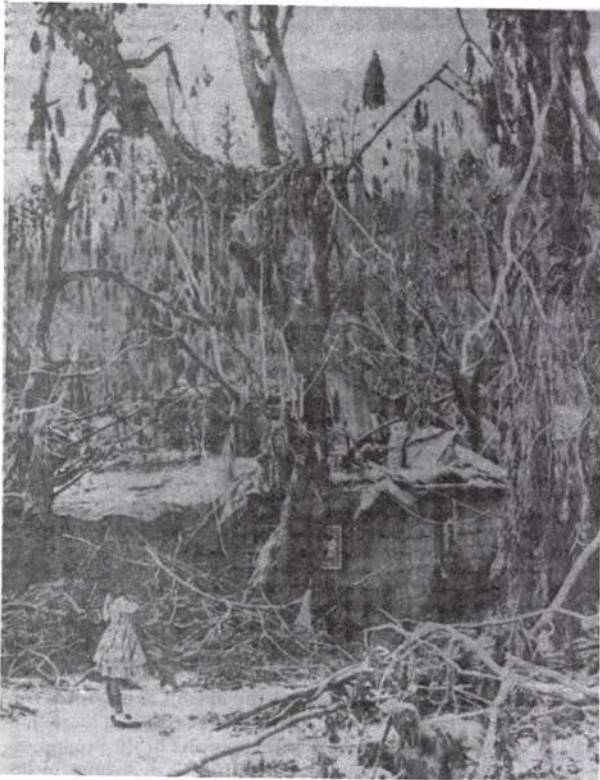


More Disasters



RESCUERS AT HYATT, BAGUIO.

Like mountain climbers gingerly picking their way up a steep granite mountain, rescuers at Hyatt Terraces hotel search for telltale signs that may point to survivors or bodies beneath the rubble. A Japanese team with sophisticated equipment dropped sensors that could detect signs of life into crevices in the ruins.



A little girl all dressed up in her Sunday best takes a final look at her wrecked home and petrified trees before joining the exodus from Olongapo City to an evacuation center. Photo was taken Sunday, a day after a dense ash fallout from erupting Pinatubo volcano.

Disasters



DEATH'S HARVEST. Tropical storm Uring swept through the central islands of Leyte and Negros Occidental and triggered landslides as well as floods which buried coastal shantytowns under mud, debris, and water. The Office of Civil Defense said 2,707 persons were confirmed dead and 3,173 missing. Photo shows a mass grave in Ormoc City, Leyte for the victims, mostly children, piled on top of each other and stripped of their clothes by the fury of the floods.



BACK TO BARRACKS OR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER? With the Makati skyscrapers for backdrop, Scout Rangers of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) march in a loose but disciplined column back to their barracks in full battle gear but with rifles pointing to the ground or strung on a shoulder in non-aggressive fashion. The government negotiator Brig. Gen. Arturo Enrile said it was an "unconditional surrender."

The Bases Negotiation



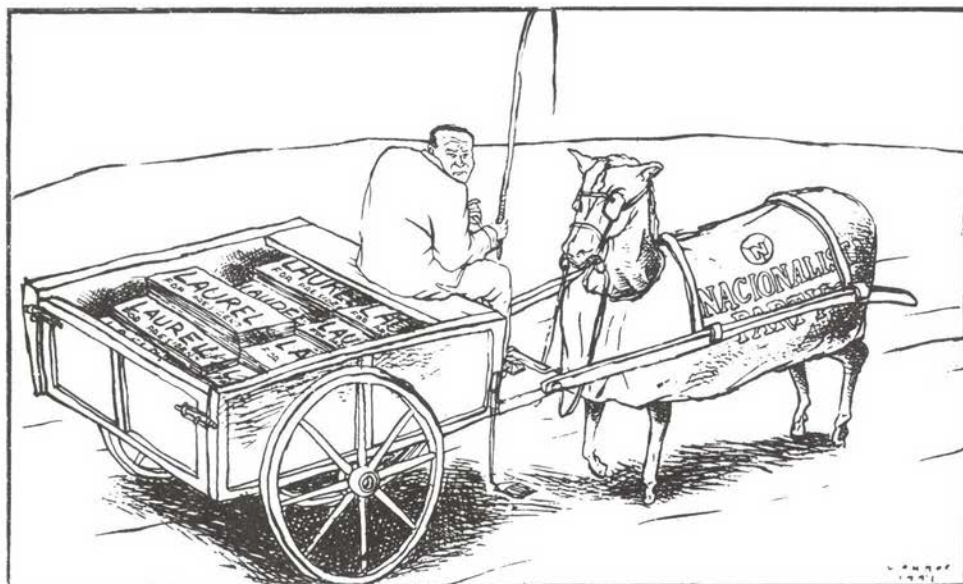
RAMOS-CHENEY MEETING. US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney waves to reporters after emerging from a closed-door meeting with his counterpart, Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, who appears grim-faced above, at Camp Aguinaldo.



LITERAL TUG-OF-WAR. A Western Police District (WPD) plainclothesman (right) pulls at an anti bases protester who in turn is being pulled away by his companions to prevent his being arrested. The action took place on United Nations Avenue near the US Embassy as the anti-bases rallies continued

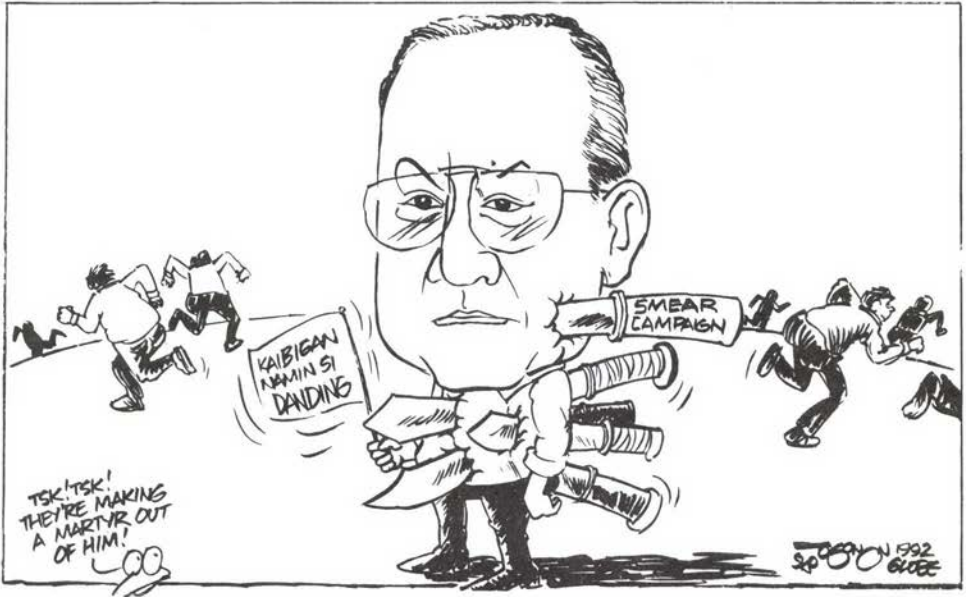


The theme of U.S. niggardliness was a constant refrain during the bases negotiations.



Laurel's defeat at the NP convention was a favorite subject for the cartoonists
www.PhilippineAmericanHistory.com

The Campaign for the Presidency



Globe cartoonist note concentrated attack on Danding Cojuangco's Presidential candidacy by all parties and fears a backlash.



THE BIGGER THEY ARE... Former First Lady Imelda R. Marcos, who's running for the seat once occupied by her late husband, President Ferdinand Marcos, lays flowers at the foot of the biggest bust of the deposed president in Mount Pugo, Agoo, La Union. Mrs. Marcos said she did not know the statue existed until she learned about it during the Marcoses' exile in the wake of the EDSA uprising in 1986.

The Campaign for the Presidency



Speaker Mitra and General Ramos fight a "no holds barred" battle for the government party nomination.



Miriam Defensor Santiago, leading candidate in the presidential race, kissing the hand of Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin at Villa San Miguel.



Jaime Cardinal Sin drapes his hand over the shoulder of Lakas-NUCO standard-bearer Fidel V. Ramos, a Protestant, after they had breakfast at the Archbishop's Palace in Mandaluyong, Metro Manila.



President Ramos gives Mrs. Aquino a buss on the cheek.



AFP chief of staff Abadia, outgoing US Ambassador Wisner and Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus during the RP-US Mutual Defense Board anniversary yesterday.



PRESIDENT Ramos and US Ambassador Richard Solomon, respectively, receive their country's flags during the turnover rites at Subic Naval Base in Olongapo City.

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

COMELEC has promulgated and enforced strict rules on registration and campaigning, and swears to police and administer a clean election. It has produced literature and staged debates intended to educate the voters. So, it is argued, at last there will be an election in which issues, and not personalities, may dominate. . . Wrong. Issues will probably influence fewer than ten percent of the electorate. . . So only personalities count? . . . Wrong again, though only partially wrong. Personalities will be important, but images have been long established for each candidate; more important, as always, will be the web of relationships in which each voter is enmeshed and which largely determine his vote: his family, with *its* personal loyalties, his church, his school *barcada*, his professional associates (legal, medical, etc.) and his *local* political affiliation, always itself linked to one of the presidential candidates. Where these elements point in different directions, it will usually be the candidate's *persona* (lasting impression, as above) that is conclusive. Though there are internal conflicts, sometimes bitter, between these loyalties, probably a minimum eighty percent of the voters are psychologically lock-stepped into one or another political camp before they vote. What candidates say, what persuasive columnists write, the impression created by a television performance (except for a spectacular failure)—these are negligible. Each candidate strives to include a maximum number of *liders* (those who deliver votes), of whom the mayors are the single most powerful group. It is the total combination of *liders* which produces a winning vote.

Incidentally, this explains Danding Cojuangco's strength. In any election, it is the total machine performance that produces a winner, and Danding, from the day of his return to the Philippines, has patiently organized a machine reaching into every village. Its strength will probably only be enhanced by the fact that before May, every candidate will be attacking him: he is a Marcos crony, he as a monopolist and economic royalist, he is ruthless, he wrecked the *Veritas* radio station in the 1986 elections, he had then-Congressman Pelaez shot, etc. These charges and issues may discourage a few individuals, but the great majority of voters approve of Danding's image as a strong man, which only he of all the candidates projects, along with the network of associations to which any Filipino is subject. The vote may be free, but not the voter. He was in a sense fore-ordained a Marcos loyalist, a Danding admirer, a Miriam enthusiast, a Salonga believer, etc.

The Campaign in March (16-31)

The last two weeks in March witnessed reciprocal blows on Mitra's LDP and Ramos' *Lakas Edsa*, which weakened each candidate and benefited Miriam Santiago and Cojuangco, but the campaign against Miriam on the grounds of mental or emotional stability escalated. Miriam still drew the crowds, and the normally skeptical *Chronicle* columnist Tony Abaya felt she could convert fans into voters, but the smart money (including, reportedly, U.S. Embassy analysts) was still on Mitra. Both Mitra and Ramos were experiencing defections and

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Cojuangco adding supporters, including Pasay City's powerful boss Mayor Cuneta, father of the popular entertainer Sharon Cuneta. At the last moment (March 30) Cojuangco replaced his vice-Presidential candidate Sonny Osmeña with Joseph Estrada, whose funds proved inadequate to finance his presidential campaign. It appeared increasingly likely that the *Iglesia ni Kristo* (INK), with its reputed minimum 500,000 - 1,000,000 votes, would provide the winning margin in Luzon and hence the election. Rumors had it that it would go to Cojuangco-Estrada.

The first T.V. presidential debate featured Santiago as glib and cocksure, Salonga as sober, slow and earnest, and Ramos as relaxed and (surprise!) sophisticated. It was a dull show. The second debate showcased Laurel's attacks on Mitra (a) of his allegedly illegal campaign contributions of P100,000 from his Palawan logger crony Alvarez, and (b) his unexplained acquisition of several ranches throughout the country; and on Cojuangco (a) for his failure to disclose his huge corporate holdings and (b) his manipulation of the funds generated by the coconut levy. Mitra's face and body language showed spectators he felt damaged by Laurel's accusations; Cojuangco, whose performance was unexpectedly powerful (Abaya, an enemy, called it "superb"), largely shrugged off Laurel's charges.

More significant, but probably disappointing (to its sponsors) in their effects, were the renewed accusations that Cojuangco had ordered the destruction of Radio Veritas, the one radio station that was anti-Marcos in the 1986 election, and the publication of *Some are Smarter than Others* (the title is an Imelda quote) purporting to document the Marcos plunder, making crony Cojuangco a major beneficiary. The trouble was that these charges were not new; true or false, they are past history and already absorbed or discounted. They will help confirm the judgment of those who are anti-Cojuangco, but will not deprive him of any indecisive voters. An interesting participant in the bash-Cojuangco campaign was Ex-U.S. Ambassador Bosworth, whom the *Wall Street Journal* quoted (*Chronicle* (Chanco), 3/17/92): "There is no way Danding could lead within a pluralistic system that holds him accountable. He operates best in the neither world." Bosworth, like his predecessor Armacost, was always convinced, whatever the evidence, that Cojuangco was an irredeemable villain.

Speaking before the oilseed producers' national convention, Blas Ople, heading Mitra's Senatorial team (*Bulletin*, 3/19/92) was playing both politician and statesman. (If he failed to win a Senatorial seat, he would probably be a winning Mitra's Foreign Secretary):

The Philippines in the next six years will be a more friendly country to foreign investors, especially those that bring with them the technologies needed for our development. The Philippines will be earnestly seeking international alliances that will promote its economic growth and social well-being.

The Philippines very likely will set its house in order so that our homes and streets will be safer than they are now. Especially under a Mitra administration, government will also be less obtrusive in business. . .

Ople had special words for the coconut industry (dominated by Cojuangco)

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

and directly solicited American cooperation with a Mitra administration in the future (and in the election?):

... the coconut industry of the Philippines will be part of this transformation that will take place, with emphasis on more value added to our exports, a more purposeful effort to industrialize the coconut products. The industries of America that utilize coconut products ought to be a source of encouragement and support in this respect. In the highly volatile world of edible and industrial fats and oils, the coconut must be able to compete for its own market share on the basis of productivity, quality and efficiency. It is in your interest to help the coconut industry of the Philippines realize this goal but in doing so, you also play the role of a benefactor to the millions that the coconut industry supports in our hinterland.

Ople then turned inspirational:

... this is the first time that an Asian nation under a democratic government will claim the status of an economic tiger, thus finally validating the thesis that freedom and bread can not only go together, but can immensely strengthen each other.

America has a stake in the outcome. Democracy in the Third World will be finally validated only when it proves capable of overcoming mass poverty through economic development.

The Liberation of Michael Barnes

On March 18, police anti-terrorist teams swooped down on six suburban safe houses of the Red Scorpion group of NPA members or sympathizers, killing 14 of their number and rescuing Michael Barnes, who had been kidnapped 61 days earlier. He was unharmed when liberated. A chorus of approval and applause soon turned into criticism when an investigation by Senator Maceda showed that there was no shoot-out, as reported by the police, but that the victims had been executed by sharpshooters and police agents, none of whom suffered any gunshot wound in the raid. Only Vicente Pacis in the *Inquirer* approved of what Maceda called a "rubout". ("They [the police] deserve congratulations") and Locsin (see below) damned the kidnappers. Most of the rest of the columnists mixed applause and blame. Barnes had apparently not been seriously mistreated during his detention. Tired and haggard when released, he was very complimentary in describing his rescue by the police.

President Aquino as Boss Tweed and Antigone

As President Aquino opened the floodgates of government funding for her anointed candidate General Ramos, critics damned her for practicing the traditional incumbency politics. Pacis (*Inquirer*, 3/24/92) called it "demeaning behavior" and compared her with legendary Boss Tweed:

If President Aquino declined to run for a second term, why is she now running Malacañang like the old Tammany Hall of New York City under the notorious political boss William Tweed who died in jail? According to a complaint filed by Senate President Neptali Gonzales in the Supreme Court,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

millions of pesos intended to attract rebels to surrender by being paid a certain sum to be able to start a peaceful life are now being used to buy votes for her anointed candidate for president. Gonzales claims this is criminal, illegal and unconstitutional.

It is also unfair to other presidential candidates and demeaning to the presidency. . .

Still, Cory still had her defenders. In a speech that could have been taken from one of the Greek tragedians, she bewailed cruel fate,* and Manuel Martinez (*Manila Times*, 3/23/92) no Sophocles, nonetheless cited liberally from her lacrymose appeal to her fellow Pampageños (Bangon Pampanga Movement):

I had overestimated my detractors' capacity for compassion and patriotism, for I was seldom spared their whip and acorn.

Worse, the military would-be rebels, who were still serving in my government, had been contemplating murder and usurpation secretly from the very day I took office, prepared to devour the Republic.

They kept calling me in public as a weak President, but in private they were weeping and gnashing their teeth because they did not have the strength or competence to succeed in deposing me in my so-called weakness. . .

Less defiantly, and almost apologetically, she continued:

I endured the sudden shocks and long-drawn trials of shouldering the problems of statecraft for which I had neither inclination nor experience.

I grappled with the nation's perils and potentials, supported by friends, disappointed by some of them, harassed by foes, and often trying to rise above my own resentments and frustrations because the national interest must be placed above all, and because we live in an imperfect world in which we are all human.

I saw all over the country the sharp contrasts of concentrated wealth and massive poverty, of urban slums and rich exclusive enclaves, of unequal opportunities everywhere that seemed to say that life is unfair to most and as I looked at this humbling tableau, I did not exempt myself from the rigor of my meditations. . .

Still, she was sure that God would punish her enemies:

My critics say that God is now punishing us with natural calamities because of the sins and shortcomings of my administration.

If so, I bow my head in contrition, chastened by the plight of the Filipino masses who, in their poverty and hopelessness, God will not punish but will bless and protect.

But I cannot resist the suspicion that God, if he will pardon me for this thought, has punished the dictatorship and the present-day demagogues and rebels more than he has punished me.

Martinez offered a benediction: "Many people think Corazon C. Aquino has a heart greater than the hearts of her critics and of the foes of freedom—assuming they have any."

*"Unwept, unfriended, . . .

I pass on my last journey to my grave.
Behold me, what I suffer and from whom,
Because I have upheld that which is high."

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

RSG Targets 14 Chinese Billionaires*

When Michael Barnes was rescued, the police anti-terrorist forces discovered, in one of the Red Scorpion Group's safe houses, a list of Chinese billionaires allegedly targeted for kidnapping. The list made fascinating reading, as it included nearly all the best-known figures in the Manila Chinese plutocracy. (All are believed to be Filipino citizens.) Chief Superintendent Vicente Vinarao of the PNP Criminal Investigation command listed the names as:

Al Yuchengco, owner of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.; Tan Yu, hotel owner and developer of the Manila Bay reclamation area; Jose Y. Campos, former Marcos trustee and owner of United Laboratories; George SK Ty, majority stockholder of Metrobank; Chiong Tiong Tai, owner of La Suerte Cigarette Corp. and Lucio Tan, owner of Fortune Tobacco, Allied Bank and Asia Brewery.

Also included in the list were Mariano Que, Mercury Drug Store chain owner; Henry Sy of the Shoemart chain of department stores; Ralph Nubla, Philippine Bank of Communications owner; Emilio Yap, publisher of *Manila Bulletin* and *Tempo*; John Gokongwei, owner of Robinson's department store chain and Robina Foods Corp.; Wellington Ty, owner of Wellington Flour Mills; and Alfredo Ramos, National Bookstore owner and *Daily Globe* owner.

Cory Blames the U.S. for her Troubles

Despite the friendly (and risky) U.S. gesture of returning to the Philippines an advance guard of Peace Corps volunteers during the first week of April, President Aquino was finding it impossible to adjust to a status in which she and her government were not automatically forgiven for disappointments and misgovernment (as well as loss of the bases), all misdeeds, and corruption because she had allegedly "restored democracy". She therefore reacted petulantly or angrily to any indication that she might no longer be the United States' chosen instrument for better government in the Philippines or for spreading the doctrine of democracy in her part of the world, or that her anointed candidate for successor might not be the Americans' preference. Horacio Paredes, who had replaced the unlamented Buddy Gomez as Palace sharpshooter, not only characterized the United States as hard-hearted, but after a story leaked that an assessment made inside the U.S. Embassy had shown Ramos, the Palace's candidate, trailing both Mitra and Cojuangco, wildly charged that the U.S. was "intervening in the election." Totally failing to assist the U.S. in its objective of securing continuing military base rights, President Aquino was now adding insult to injury, repaying with ingratitude six years of faithful support which had kept her regime in power despite its progressive mismanagement and corruption. She was truly biting the hand that had fed her—not least because she

*A major sensation during the succeeding Ramos administration was created by the evidence that the leadership of most of the Chinese kidnaping groups was to be found inside the PNP itself.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

simultaneously called upon the United States to stop Imelda Marcos from bringing the remains of Ferdinand Marcos back from the United States for fear that Imelda would make the same demagogic display of the coffin as Cory had made of Ninoy's corpse after his assassination.

Robert Reid of the AP (*Newday*, 4/1/92) had linked the current strains in U.S.-Philippine relationships to the removal of the U.S. troops. In radio broadcasts approved by Mrs. Aquino, Reid reported that Paredes had griped:

We already know what kind of people we are dealing with, . . . I am wondering why we should pay any more attention to the Americans since the biggest aid does not come from the United States but from Japan.

This week, Paredes accused the United States of failing to establish a withdrawal committee required by the 1988 US-Philippine base agreement. But the agreement contains no such requirement, and US officials say they have been working closely with Filipino authorities. . .

Last month, Mrs. Aquino claimed the US military asked for access rights to an airstrip at Subic despite questions about the constitutionality of such an arrangement. That angered US officials, who said no such request had been made although they would not rule one out later.

Much of the criticism has centered on alleged "stripping" of the base by the Navy. The 1988 agreement commits the United States to leave behind non-removable items like buildings, generators and other fixed assets. Publicly, the US Embassy has avoided a "war of words" with the Aquino government, which leaves office June 30. Privately, however, US officials are dismayed over the Aquino government's tactics.

The Inquirer (4/4/92) further reported the Palace's grievances:

Yesterday, a statement by Paredes, broadcast over government radio, was the latest in a series of anti-American remarks by the administration which US officials say threaten US-Philippine relations.

How dare the Embassy analyze the President's candidate as losing to Mitra or Cojuangco? The leak, Paredes was sure, was deliberate:

The study was leaked to several Manila newspapers, which described it as "a survey". US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the study was not a public opinion survey, but was based on the assessments of embassy staff.

They said the finding that Mitra was leading the seven-member field, which includes Imelda Marcos, was correct. Most surveys show Mitra and Ramos trailing former Agrarian Reform Secretary Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Paredes, the voice of the Palace, asserted that this was foul play and that Ambassador Wisner was involved:

"If this is an internal memo, then why was it leaked?" Paredes asked. "If this is internal to the embassy, then who released it? It must be one of the officials of the embassy."

On Wednesday, US Ambassador Frank Wisner told American businessmen in Washington that the United States considered the leading candidates "good friends of the United States."

Paredes was really spooked, and he made the President look even worse than she was:

"What I can say is that in our voting, Mr. Wisner, we are not voting based on who you like or not," Paredes said. "We are choosing a president for ourselves, not for America."

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

The T.V. debates of the last two weeks of March featured Laurel's attack on Mitra (Laurel drew blood) and a battle between Mayoral candidate Lim vs. Lopez, Manila Mayor. When the lawman was matched against the Mayor, whose hoodlums he had so often fought, violence almost resulted. Whatever the truth of their respective charges, Lim had the better image. In Manila, it looked like Lim, Lopez, Bagatsing in that order, but Imelda's money, if she were to desert Fajardo and chose to spend, might make Bagatsing win.

The Campaign in April (1-15)

The *Star* is close to the Chinese community and a supporter of the Palace, though Max Soliven, its editor, is not. Who was responsible for its editorial of March 30 is uncertain, but its analysis of the role of money and party machinery in Philippine election should be studied by election analysts. After discussing the Chinese community's presidential preferences (it said that they had deserted Ramos for Mitra), it strangely found that the Chinese were backing Miriam because she was the Americans'(!) choice:

The American side, however, has solidified behind Miriam Santiago as reflected in a straw vote conducted among executives of multinationals. While this does not necessarily translate into cash, not immediately anyway, it could very well reflect the US Embassy's preference.

Then the editorial turned to money and the election:

Danding Cojuangco, . . . has not been able to generate financial support from any sector, even if a sizeable group of businessmen has expressed support for him. He tried to get the Chinese community behind him but instead scared them off. He is reportedly having liquidity problems which could worsen as election day approaches. Jovy Salonga and Doy Laurel had nowhere to turn for financial support.

Election spending, the *Star* editorial asserted, had so far been frugal:

. . . mostly for traveling expenses and organizing rallies. The nitty gritty of getting election day support of political leaders down to the barangay level is still to come. That is when well funded candidates hope to be not only the highest but the last bidder as well. To be sure, despite a possible down-to-the-wire finish, dole outs will not be one-shot deals but will approximate open-type bidding which will involve topping one another's offer all the way to the polling booths.

The final money question was who in the end would pocket it? The voters or the *liders*? (In 1986, many Marcos *liders* kept the money for themselves):

The key to all that spending, however, will be how well and how much of party funds entrusted to political leaders will be delivered to the voters. That is where a well-disciplined party will make all the difference.

The principal feature of the campaign during the early days of April was a concerted attack on Miriam Santiago on the grounds of her psychiatric history. Tomas Morato, Cory's ex-film censor and a scion of a Quezon *confidante*, was only the most specific of a whole squad of worry-warts. Cunanan (*Inquirer*, 4/5/92) wrote:

Lakas senatorial bet Manuel Morato asserts that the issue of presidential bet Miriam Santiago's mental health has become a matter of urgent public

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

concern, in view of her record of psychiatric treatments and reported nervous breakdowns in the past. Morato asserts that Santiago had been receiving psychiatric treatment from the late Dr. Robert Walter of UST Hospital until his untimely death last year. Now Morato is forcing the issue by asking that the candidate's mental records be bared and reviewed by competent authorities. I think Morato is correct in raising this issue, as the mental and emotional stability under duress of a candidate for the nation's highest office is a matter of grave concern. . .

As the saying goes, the female of the species is more deadly than the male. Observe how Cunanan inserts the stiletto:

More and more citizens, as well as the media, are now clamoring that the truth must be ferreted about Miriam Santiago's mental and emotional fitness for the presidency; if she's found to be fit, well and good. But the matter must be laid on the table and met head-on by this candidate, rather than hurl invectives at those who raise the issue.

Imelda Loses the Battle of the Body

On April 10, Imelda Marcos finally accepted defeat in her struggle to return President Marcos' remains to the Philippines before the May 11 election. She had claimed that she was only complying with her historical duty to secure for the President an honored burial in his own country, but it was obviously her intention to use it to embarrass President Aquino by a parade and demonstration against the Aquino government—just as Cory had used Ninoy's corpse to humiliate the Marcos government in 1983. Everyone saw through the tactics of both parties, and although Imelda had at first accepted Cory's prescribed rules (a flight directly from Honolulu to Ilocos Norte and interment there without a stopover in Manila), her handlers made threats to follow another itinerary, and Palace permission for the flight was withdrawn until after the election.

More Lights Go Out; Air Traffic Interrupted

As March passed into April, the power situation went from bad to worse and from worse to desperate, as one generating plant after another broke down and water in reservoirs sank to their bottoms. From two hour brownouts, outages in Manila went to four and even six or eight, often unannounced, and successive promises to restore power went unfulfilled. The press raged, and there were those who felt that it was symbolic that the bright promise with which Mrs. Aquino entered Malacañang should end in darkness over much of the archipelago.

To add to the President's woes, the air traffic controllers struck, stranding thousands of travelers and further strengthening the international impression that the Philippines was a good place to stay away from. Frantic efforts by the government to replace the strikers with dangerous substitutes from air force personnel or traffic controllers from outside the country finally restored limited traffic after five days. The strike reflected another unfulfilled promise by the government that salaries would be raised. Like the public school teachers, the air traffic officers had been deceived, and they finally struck without warning on April 4.

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

President Aquino Denounces U.S. Treatment of Filipino Veterans

In the presence of U.S. Ambassador Wisner and a U.S. Presidential delegation of American war veterans honoring the Filipinos and Americans who fell in 1942 at Mt. Samat, Bataan, Mrs. Aquino used the occasion less to honor the dead (she has little use for soldiers, dead or alive, except for the members of the Presidential Guard), than to rebuke the United States for what she called ingratitude. As reported by the *Inquirer* (4/10/92):

Deciding in favor of freedom, Filipino veterans fought alongside Americans . . . when the smoke of war had cleared and the victory was won, the services of Filipino veterans appeared to be remembered only in word and not in deed.

"Our words extolling the joint sacrifices of Filipinos and Americans rings hollow until this is resolved."

The *Inquirer* continued by observing that Cory had had few good words recently for the U.S.:

Mrs. Aquino's rebuke was the latest in a string of denunciations of Washington, which Manila once considered its closest friend and ally.

Relations, strengthened by fighting together against Japanese troops in World War II, have been under strain since the Senate rejected a new US military bases treaty last September.

Longer Brownouts, Insurgent Victories, Teacher Hunger Strike

Cory was spending millions in pork barrel funds to back her candidate Ramos and being photographed at newly-opened traffic flyovers. Defying IMF advice, she also reduced fuel prices as a sop to voters. Her government was staggering towards its end as Manila and Mindanao experienced six to twelve hour brownouts, the AFP suffered defeats both in Surigao in the south and the Cordillera in the north, and the public school teachers resumed their hunger strike. Still, her government had defeated the strike of the air controllers, refusing to rehire twelve strike leaders.

Mrs. Aquino's feebly humorous *riposte* to these disasters was to ask her audience at the National Press Club Gridiron Night to join her in the following ironic prayer:

"Almighty God, we have gathered here tonight to witness yet another Gridiron show. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Forgive them, Lord for they know not what they do.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Dear Lord, many, many years ago I prayed and prayed for the return of press freedom. Thank you, Lord, for answering my prayers. . .

So many newspapers, so many tabloids, so many talk shows, so many radio commentators. I guess, it's my fault, dear Lord. When I asked You to return press freedom I should also have included some specifications. . .

Almighty Father, we thank you for the members of the media who always seek the truth. Perhaps, someday, they will package it truthfully enough beyond considerations of selling their papers or time slots.

Bless those outstanding media personalities who have been honest with us

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

and more importantly honest with themselves. May their shining example inspire us all to work for honest, orderly and peaceful elections.

Heavenly Father, please bless my successor as he becomes the next target of media. Finally Lord, thank you for all the blessings You have showered upon us these last six years."

... President Aquino did not list all her blessings, but press freedom was clearly not one of them.

The first two weeks in April also featured the Iglesia ni Kristo's endorsement of Danding Cojuangco and Joseph Estrada and escalating attacks on Miriam Santiago's sanity and medical history. Danding was bolstered by Estrada's strength among the poor (the effectiveness of the INK as a voting block was also based chiefly on the poor), while Miriam's strength though declining, continued to register in the public opinion polls.

Presumably content with what he felt was his new position as a front-runner, Danding failed to appear for the Presidential debate held on April 11, offering opponents Laurel and the media, headed by the *Inquirer*, to claim that the publication of the old stories of Danding as a Marcos crony, monopolist, and killer re-published in *Some are Smarter than Others*, along with a criminal case filed against him by U.S. Ambassador Pelaez as the man behind the latter's attempted assassination in 1982, had frightened him away from the forum. Danding asserted that he was happy to see the charges at last made in court where they could be refuted.

Miriam had her stout defenders. Tony Abaya in the *Chronicle* pointed out that her principal accuser, Senatorial candidate Tomas Morato, seemed to be crazier than Miriam: he was the victim of an irrational obsession, while any psychiatric counseling on her part was actually a sign of healthy reaction to strain rather than a confession of weakness. Miriam did not help her case by refusing to admit any psychiatric help, and wildly denouncing her accusers as media assassins, refusing to discuss the charges. Belinda Cunanan, who had emerged as the leading anti-Cojuangco and anti-Miriam mouthpiece, wrote in the *Inquirer* (4/5/92):

Chit Pedrosa, the famous author of Imelda's untold story, wrote the untold story of Miriam Santiago, and blasts the myth that media created and fed around her being the incorruptible graft-buster at CID. Pedrosa shows that the truth was more often that arrests were faked to build up the graft-busting image so that, as the subject was herself quoted, when the time came for reckoning that truth, no one would believe her detractors.

If Bel Cunanan was Cojuangco's and Miriam's principal media assassin, her *Inquirer* colleague Ninez Cacho Olivarez was one of President Aquino's most severe critics. On April 5, she denounced the Palace's expressed indignation that a "leaked report" from inside the American Embassy had Ramos running behind Mitra:

Is Malacañang running scared?

It must be, for it to get a press secretary to come up with downright stupid statements. It must be, for the presidential spokesman to act as campaign manager and spokesman of Fidel Ramos.

In truth, the embassy study is not news to many Filipinos since Filipinos

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

rate the presidential candidates in much the same ranking. It is only Malacañang that keeps on insisting that Aquino's anointed is leading the presidential pack, based on its spurious and unscientific surveys.

The columnist advised the President to "admit as well that no matter how much of government resources are blatantly being misused to prop up the candidacy of Aquino's anointed, her horse won't make it in a clean election."

A week later (4/11/92), Cacho-Olivarez topped her own rhetoric:

What can Fidel Ramos, who is as weak and as indecisive as Aquino, do to better the power situations? As an Aquino administrator, he did not push for the creation of alternative power sources. Isn't it more likely that he, like Aquino, will import more expensive fuel-dependent generators that break down in less than two years? Isn't it more likely, that he, like Aquino, will coast along, wipe his hands of responsibility and blame everyone else except himself when the problems reach crisis proportions? . . .

A vote for Ramos is a vote for Aquino. And a vote for both is a vote for hell on earth.

The Manila Mayoralty race was a hammer-and-tongs battle, but for Art Borjal, a usually savvy *Star* columnist (4/15/92), Lim-Atienza were bound to be deserving winners:

The magic of Fred Lim, several times "Most Outstanding Policeman" of the entire country, cuts across social classes. This can be explained by the collective yearning for peace, order and security, by the sight of uncollected garbage in the streets, by the high crime rate, the daylight muggings, the chaos in everyday living in Manila.

An observation by Senatorial candidate Sonny Osmeña (former Cojuangco vice Presidential bet) that stealing was relative to time and place set off another of Teddy Boy Locsin's spectacular excoriations (*Free Press*, 4/11/92) which had the additional merit of displaying his own alleged erudition:

[Osmeña said that] in Saudi Arabia there is no official corruption because everything in sight of the Saudi family is owned by them. Meaning theft, possession, and ownership are all one and the same to Arabs. Have you cleared this with the Arabs? Then why, in God's name, are they complaining about the Jewish theft of Palestine if might makes right as Arabs believe—according to you? And why are some Arabs going around with only one hand who never came close enough to smell, let alone pick, the pockets of a Saudi family member? . . .

Where did you learn Feudal history? In Cebu? Certainly not from Marc Bloch. Did you know that the Ten Commandments, including the one about *not stealing*, were regarded as canonical in the Middle Ages? Yes. It is only now, in your mind, that its commands are apocryphal, non-binding, and relative to the stage of a society's economic development. And a Catholic society at that. You will hear from the Pope.

On the other hand, Teddy Boy's father, in the same issue, damned his normal favorites, the Human Righters, who were protesting the police's alleged "rubout" of the Red Scorpion Gang:

The Philippines is a country in which to invoke "due process of law" is to mock it. That amounts to law's delay which keeps killers—like the one who killed that poor girl or the Marcos dummies in possession of the dictatorship's loot—out of prison. In this country, to invoke the law is to support law-breakers. (It has come to that.)

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

US-RP Military Exercise Scheduled

Joint military exercises between the American and Philippine Armed Forces have been held ever since World War II, but they have normally been announced by the respective military commands. When U.S. Ambassador Wisner announced such an exercise, to occur "before the end of the year", it was obviously intended to emphasize that the September 1991 rejection of the military bases agreement did not invalidate the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty. Ambassador Wisner also reminded Filipinos that training for the Philippine military in the United States would continue. After all, there was "a wide range of existing defense cooperation programs within the framework of the mutual defense treaty."

The Ambassador seemed anxious to put to rest fears that the United States would seek ways to re-create the situation which obtained before the treaty's rejection, but without entirely foreclosing the possibility of arrangements that might be reached with the new government which would take office in June!

There's nothing on the table right now. . . There's no consideration being given by my side, nor by your side to access arrangements. I'm sure I've not heard any from yours about any specifics on access, . . .

Let's see after the elections. . . As we move down toward the end of our time in Subic with the specific needs that you have or that we have, these ought to be addressed, . . .

The bases' inventory had not yet been submitted, the Ambassador said, and once again emphasized that the problem of the Spratley islands, claimed by the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei, should be settled by diplomacy, thus replying to Foreign Minister Manglapus' claim that the United States was obligated by the defense treaty to support Philippine military forces now in the Spratleys.

The Campaign in April (16-30)

The major events of the penultimate stage of the campaign were (1) escalated, systematic attacks on Miriam Santiago for past psychiatric treatment, and on Danding Cojuangco, chiefly for his alleged misuse of the coconut levy; (2) Cardinal Sin's dramatic Easter excommunication of (a) Cojuangco as a plunderer and Marcos crony and (b) of Ramos, the President's candidate, for his past association with ex-President Marcos; (3) the first public accusations that Mrs. Aquino might declare martial law if necessary to block a Cojuangco victory; and (4) charges and counter-charges between Enrile and Ramos, each blaming the other as the principal executor of Marcos' martial law.

The *Inquirer* and the *Chronicle* led major assaults on both Santiago and Cojuangco, the former fielding an "investigative team" that brilliantly discovered that Santiago had written columns in the *Bulletin* in 1979 and 1984 which chattily confided to readers that she had been subject to fits of deep depression every two years and intimated that she had consulted medical practitioners. The candidate was then driven to admit that she had indeed had psychiatric help

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

(the *Inquirer* shrielled “nervous breakdown”), but that it wasn’t all that serious, and it wasn’t true that she had been in a mental institution. The charges (and her past violent denials) hurt the candidate, but only the election would tell how much. Her supporters are concentrated in Manila and urban areas, and she had never been expected to score heavily in the rural regions, where the bulk of the voting public resides. As Amante Bigornia, senior political writer of the *Standard* (4/27/92) put it after traveling in Mindanao, the election had narrowed down to the three leaders—Mitra, Cojuangco, and Ramos. He emphasized that it would be the respective machines, fueled by generous financial infusions from the three leaders, which would tell the tale:

The contest is rather close, according to observers. The key factors that could tilt the balance, they say, include the political clout of their respective leaders in the region and the “incentives” given them to “spare” time for their national candidates.

For however much a local leader might wish to help his presidential candidate, he is hardpressed for time and energy to extend assistance since he, himself, is also running for office. This is compounded by the fact that party alliances have become so loose that he has to make compromises even at the expense of his party’s standard bearer.

Between the lines, the analyst was saying that Cojuangco would win in Mindanao, because he had and would spend what the *lid*ers required to mobilize the voters. On the other hand, Amante’s brother, Jess Bigornia in the *Bulletin* (4/17/92) solemnly intoned that Cojuangco must refute or explain the charges hurled at him by Ambassador Pelaez and the others, or face repudiation at the polls:

Fallout from such issues as mental health and moral qualities have not touched the Tarlac tycoon. But the Pelaez charges are directed at him personally, questioning not only his personal integrity, but also his business expertise. It cannot be brushed aside as a political “hatchet job” inflicted on a frontrunning candidate. Friends and supporters urge “Danding” to face the question squarely and, taking the bull by the horns as it were explain how he has conserved the money of coconut planters through careful and judicious investments that have since increased many times over.

Cardinal Sin dramatically tossed his bomb from the pulpit on Easter Sunday in a pastoral message that without mentioning specific names, in effect threatened hellfire and damnation to any citizen who should vote for Cojuangco or Imelda Marcos, and by circumlocution made plain that his own choice was Mitra and Fernan, though Santiago and Laurel were not unacceptable. This blatant political intervention produced a storm of denunciation in the media, but some saw it as a justified *riposte* to Cojuangco’s endorsement by the *Iglesia ni Kristo*. Mrs. Aquino at first tried to insist that her candidate was not rejected by the Cardinal, but the Cardinal, in a second statement then left no one in doubt insisted that he included the Protestant Ramos in his ban.

There was yet another T.V. presidential “debate”, but it was dull and probably won or lost no votes (Cojuangco was absent). The *Standard’s* Nelson Navarro (4/27/92) called it “an exercise in good behavior”:

Given the rather tense atmosphere, the examinees wore grim looks and

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

stared impassively or icily at each other as they went through three seemingly harmless questions that were apparently designed to trip anybody who strayed too far from the familiar lines that their respective staffs have long ago concocted for them on just about everything under the sun.

Because all six candidates basically stuck to the tried-and-tested campaign lines, the proceedings turned out to be humdrum replay of past encounters and political appearances. Not even a brief but fensy exchange between Eddie Ramos and Doy Laurel could derail the general flow of enforced political civility.

Anti-Palace columnists had been hinting for some time that they suspected that the President would declare martial law if necessary to keep Cojuangco from becoming President. Those few with some lingering sympathy for their fallen idol, couldn't really blame the apostle of Democracy for extreme measures taken to protect the country from a Marcos crony. Those for whom Mrs. Aquino now represented a family combination as cordially hated as the Marcoses and Romualdezses six years ago, feared that such a move would be dictated by her family's determination to keep what they had stolen from the public as well as snatched from the Marcoses and Danding Cojuangco. Ninez Cachó Olivarez (*Inquirer*, 4/26/92) was again the most brutal:

Just what is it that Aquino and her loyal generals want to happen to the country if her anointed does not win the elections?

Do they want political turmoil and instability to follow the national elections? Do they want the people to unseat the new president if he happens to be the candidate against whom Aquino has been campaigning?

Do Palace and military officials want a peaceful and smooth turnover of political power or chaos before and after the polls?

They claim they want to see a peaceful transfer of power, yet the Palace comes out with a statement saying that Aquino cannot live with a Cojuangco or a Marcos presidency.

The columnist was suspicious of the Cory-revamped AFP:

. . . Perhaps the intent of Palace and military officials is not just to prevent the victory of Aquino's political foes. Perhaps a larger plan that would keep them in political power after the elections is now in the works.

With such an unprofessional and prostituted military, anything is possible—including the administration's plan to disrupt elections.

What made these harsh judgments sound plausible to some was that the AFP was announcing *coup* plots (always foiled or neutralized) every few days. This of course is standard AFP practice; it did not begin with Abadía and Nazareno, but it has never (not even in the days just before Marcos proclaimed martial law in September 1972) been so prevalent.

Flyovers and Darkness at Noon

The Palace was spending wildly on behalf of General Ramos, but despite inflated poll figures, none of the politically sophisticated put him higher than second, and some as low as fourth. Desperately trying to show off something for six years of power and inertia, Mrs. Aquino was being photographed on completed flyovers, which had indeed been constructed competently and swiftly, but which chiefly changed the sites of traffic jams. The Palace announce-

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

ments of lowered prices for fuels and abolition of the import levy in last-minute appeals for votes for her candidate were precisely like her predecessor's gimmicks to stay in power, but in a final blow to those who had placed her in power, she even repudiated the Cardinal who had blessed her investiture.

Mrs. Aquino was lucky that the season was one in which the hours of daylight were long, as power outages continued day after day, and were even more frustrating to the citizen because of repeated announcements that problems had been overcome. In fact, readers began to prepare for the worst when the National Power Corporation issued an optimistic bulletin in the same way that they stocked their storm cellars with every AFP assurance that it had the situation well in hand.

Even the frantic efforts of the COMELEC to show that it was on the job, putting Cagayan (Enrile's province) under military control, staging T.V. programs urging the populace not to sell their votes, or arresting those who had ignored the ban on firearms, made as many citizens apprehensive as relieved.

. . . Despite the feverish AFP *alarums*, most were not worried that the elections would be interrupted; they feared that trouble would erupt when the counting began.

Washington Leaks anti-Cojuangco Telegrams from Manila

U.S. Ambassador Wisner's job as neutral observer was made more difficult when some of the many Cojuangco-haters in the State Department leaked an exchange of 1984 telegrams on Cojuangco's successful efforts to establish a seller's monopoly to deal with what he claimed was an American coconut oil buyers' conspiracy. Those who leaked the telegram may have pleased the American purchasers, but they caused Ambassador Wisner trouble. American intervention in the election was once again charged, but since such alleged intervention was against the media's chosen enemy, there was no outrage, which would have risen to *tsunami* size if the leaked document had targeted Mitra or Ramos. The media are not agreed on who should be the President, but they are united *against* Cojuangco. Of the major "independent" columnists, only one (Beltran) avoids denouncing him as a scoundrel and Marcos crony.

A Burst of Presidential Leadership

For the first time in six years, President Aquino was acting like a President, exploiting the presidential bully pulpit and the pork barrel, being photographed at newly-completed flyovers, and flying to address vote-rich areas of the Philippines. She had already presumably gelded the AFP by appointing her own generals (ignoring seniority and AFP sentiment), so there were no weapons in the presidential armory which she had not utilized and no friends or allies including the Cardinal and her own brother whom she had not overtrumped. Her objective, the first in six years to ignite such dynamism, was to see her

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

choice as successor become President. Even her daughter Kris had been assigned to campaign for Cory's anointed, General Fidel (Eddie) Ramos. In one crisis after another during her administration, Mrs. Aquino had been indecisive and inarticulate, but she had at last found her voice, and was zestfully utilizing the prerogatives of the Presidency on behalf of her candidate. Though Cory appeared to be fighting a losing battle a week before the election, her lack of apparent success had not outwardly discouraged her. She was even apparently willing to bankrupt the PNB to bankroll her candidate. This threatened to ruin one of her few economic successes, as the *Globe* (5/6/92) sadly pointed out:

Perhaps today he will be asked to resign, but for the past several weeks Philippine National Bank president Edgardo Espiritu has been parrying the attempts of Malacañang to get its hands on over P900 million in government deposits in the PNB. Malacañang needs it for the Ramos campaign. This is wrong, Espiritu told Malacañang. First because it would adversely affect the bank to have so much money pulled out of it in one blow, but foremost because it is wrong to use public funds for partisan political purposes.

Edgardo Espiritu is the man who nursed the PNB from desiccated Marcos milking cow to the jewel in the crown of Cory Aquino's few economic achievements. The pressure is on to get him out of the way. He will be fired for honesty and for his concern that the PNB not be plundered again for politics.

. . . A few days later, Espiritu resigned, and the President accepted his resignation "with deep regret."

In her heedless determination to elect her candidate, President Aquino did not hesitate to betray yet another sacred *utang na loob*. The victim this time was ex-President Macapagal, who in a dignified but sorrowful open letters to Mrs. Aquino (*Star*, 5/8/92), pleaded with her on behalf of his two daughters and son, all of whom had served her faithfully and well. Mrs. Aquino, he lamented, had successively ignored his recommendations first that his daughter Gloria, who had served with distinction as Undersecretary of Trade and Commerce, be named Director General NEDA vice Solita Monsod, then equally unsuccessfully, as the replacement for Secretary Jose Concepcion when the latter left the Cabinet. Macapagal also begged the president not to oppose his other daughter, Cielo, her own *comadre*, who was now running for Governor of Pampanga, since Cory herself had asked Cielo to run for vice Governor in 1987. Sadly, Macapagal wrote, in part:

My three children, Cielo, Gloria and Diosdado, Jr. served faithfully in your administration, without any intercession and at the instance of incumbent officials in your government. Gloria at the initiative of your then Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo; Diosdado Jr., initially at the invitation of Land Bank President Deogracias Vistan who was his colleague at the Citibank where my son was a senior vice-president and later at the request of Secretaries of Finance Vicente Jayme and Jesus Estanislao; and Cielo on your desire aforesaid.

I cannot help recalling that in your speech on my 79th birthday on September 28, 1989 at the Philippine International Convention Center you said: "I thank you also for giving me your children to help me in my government."

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

Mrs. Aquino gave no sign that she was moved by the former President's appeal, again committing the unforgivable sin, among Filipinos, of ignoring a debt of deep obligation. She was once again *walang utang na loob*.

More Trouble with the Americans

From the Philippine viewpoint, nothing was going well with the Americans, as Ambassador-designate Solomon, on May 8 given his *agrement*, would find out when he arrived: there were wounded feelings on the loss of all the Subic dry-docks, there was a simmering dispute on the failure of the Philippines to protect intellectual property and a consequent threat to put the Philippines on the Watch List, which *Business World* (5/8/92) oversimplified by writing that the Philippine Government would "work for the repeal of a Philippine law which authorized the commercial reprinting of foreign books as 'an initial move to appease Americans' and 'to bail itself out' of the USTR's watchlist of violators of intellectual property rights law." The problem, however, was not primarily laws, but enforcement, and the Americans appeared to be making their characteristic mistake of believing that new laws or their abolition would correct faults in an ineffective or corrupt bureaucracy. . . This wasn't all Ambassador Solomon could look forward to: Imelda was demanding that the United States clean up toxic waste as the bases, and the Manila Bay reclamation might soon not only ruin the view from the Embassy but encroach on other Embassy privileges.

The Campaign's Last Days (May 1-10)

On May first, the AFP announced that it had foiled yet another plot by the right-wing military rebels—this time to bomb the Palace "in order to disrupt the elections." Though General Abadía claimed he had confessions of pilots approached by the rebels, many were suspicious that the Palace wanted to postpone the election, or cancel it if Cojuangco were to win.

On May second, Ramos supporters led media representatives to break into the House of Representatives printing plant, where they discovered masses of Mitra campaign material that they said had been printed there—a flagrant violation of COMELEC rules. On the other hand, Senator Gonzales, a Mitra leader, exposed a planned Palace violation of the local government code by channeling *honoraria* not to barangay or town treasurers, but to its own DLG officials. Bishop Manalo of the INK assailed Cardinal Sin for accepting Aquino handouts from gambling casino funds, and urged his own faithful, 1.5 million strong, to vote for Cojuangco, along with a mixed INK Senatorial slate, of whom 11 were Mitra supporters, eight Cojuangco, 2 Salonga and one each for Ramos, Laurel and Marcos. In sum, during the last week, goals had been scored against Mitra and Ramos, and Cojuangco had profited. However, Kris Aquino, the President's stage-struck daughter, hugged her "Tito Eddie" Ramos at a campaign meeting in Cagayan de Oro and promised to marry movie star Robin Padilla if Tito Eddie

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

won. How many votes this won for Ramos is dubious, but Kris was a more attractive stage property than a cigar.

On Sunday, May third, Cardinal Sin used his pulpit once again to denounce Cojuangco, Imelda Marcos and Ramos as Godless infidels, and demanded that faithful Catholics not vote for them. Mitra's opponents urged him to withdraw from the race for using the House of Representatives printing plant to produce campaign material, but he filed a counter-claim for violent entry against the raiders. A Muslim police lieutenant in Manila was killed by the NPA and Cojuangco's candidate for Manila Mayor, Pablo Ocampo, was unsuccessfully ambushed, but up to that point, more of Ramos' supporters had been gunned down than those of his opponents. One candidate asked COMELEC to "disqualify" the INK, but was refused. For the Senate, Pacis (*Inquirer*, 5/5/92) found pro-base Senators running ahead of the *antis*, but entertainers (Sotto, Revilla, Webb) topping the list. Robert Reid of the AP called the election campaign a fiesta because of the participation of numerous showbiz performers.

A *Globe* editorial (5/6/92) assessed the violent struggle between Mitra and Ramos as damaging to both sides, and drew the fateful inference:

... for those who know how to read such seismic occurrences in politics, it is the Cojuangco candidacy that stands to profit the most. Not because Ramos and Mitra supporters will move over to him, but because the undecided vote is so huge and because opposition votes have nearly solidified behind his bid...

From their inability to get together and sheer amateurism in the conduct of the campaign, Cory's erstwhile colleagues are handing Cojuangco an open path to Malacañang.

In his own newspaper, *Newsday*, Cojuangco predicted (5/5/92) that there would be a last-minute attempt to block his victory by accusing him of conspiracy in the assassination of Senator Ninoy Aquino in 1983, and asked why he had not been indicted earlier. Editorially, the newspaper wondered if the authorities planned to arrest him just before election. . . Senator Saguisag, Cory's despairing Knight Lancelot, indirectly admitted that the prospect of a Danding victory was real (*Manila Times*, 5/6/92):

... given the possibility that someone now fashionably looked down upon to top the polls, should we allow him to run the country in the interim? Even if only for a day, a week, or whatever?

Well, we have tried the geniuses, the lawyers, the pros. They may not have done any better necessarily. Look at the mess we are in.

One who wins cleanly and credibly deserves respect or the benefit of the doubt. And we cannot underestimate anybody's capacity for subjective growth, assuming he can spot and get good advisers.

Melchor resigned from his post as head of the Palace committee on bases conversion. A TV broadcast quoted his criticism against the way in which the US was leaving the bases, calling it "spite-driven, unduly harsh . . . and destructive of the bilateral relationship."

Melchor's use of the word "spite" to describe American behaviour following the base negotiations is remarkable, as spite was precisely the sentiment which the American negotiators believed motivated several of those on the *Filipino*

THE FINAL HUMILIATIONS

team, including Secretaries Manglapus and Bengzon. It seems to the author likely that Melchor's reaction was yet another example of the Filipino knee-jerk reaction to any expression of nationalistic sentiment on the part of Americans. In the Filipino mind-set, Filipino nationalism is a noble sentiment, on the part of Americans it is an ugly, offensive and anti-Filipino emotion.

The newspapers on Thursday May 7 reported that Mitra followers had charged the Ramos camp with a P4.5 million peso extortion from a garment firm. Unreliable Metro Manila polls reported that Cojuangco had moved into second place, displacing Ramos (22.7-20.3), while Miriam Santiago, formerly first-placer, had dropped to 33% from 45% a week earlier. The right wing military rebels (YOU) charged the AFP with salvaging one of their members, Allen Paje. Ambassador Pelaez accused Cojuangco of high treason for his agreement with Nur Misuari to respect the 1977 Tripoli agreement with the Moros. A fire destroyed Doy Laurel's Makati headquarters and burned several floors of the Philbanking building on Ayala Avenue. The National Power Corporation, reversing itself, said it could not guarantee power on election day. Cardinal Vidal of Cebu told his parishoners to ignore Cardinal Sin's advice on voting, since Cebu and Manila were independent archdioceses. This was a small boost for Danding in the Visayas.

There were more poll figures, including a Japanese (Iwata), which had Mitra winning with 27% of the vote over Ramos with 24%, and Cojuangco third, but Mahar Mangahas' latest, reputedly reliable, Social Weather Stations reported Ramos and Miriam leading and Cojuangco a distant third, but an unbelievable 30% as undecided. It is incredible that thirty percent of the fiercely partisan Filipinos had not decided on whom to vote for. They were concealing their preferences from the pollsters. The writer of these lines (May 9), relying, as indices of voter behavior, on the Filipino preference for strong government, money *cum* organization, and visual evidence from the Luneta, predicted that in an honest count, Danding Cojuangco would win.

Late in the afternoon on May 8, Cojuangco (who had been forbidden by COMELEC to hire buses) nonetheless managed to fill up the immense Luneta with an estimated 1-1/2 million for his final rally, his *miting de avance*. Earlier in the day, Miriam Santiago had assembled less than half that many. Though the press downplayed the size of the Cojuangco meeting, a T.V. broadcast showed aerial shots with the huge Luneta jammed. This was only one sign, but a spectacular one, that the billionaire was spending without stint during the crucial final days of the campaign.

Sunday the tenth, on the eve of the election, the *Inquirer* concentrated on savaging Cojuangco, from its banner headline shrieking "Danding Pact Means War," to a Cunanan column which reported a "discernible shift to Ramos because of Danding." Even its first page pictures fought the enemy: one showed Miriam looking despondent and exhausted, another featured Mitra, with his patent split-melon grin; a third. Ramos waving his cigar. These were all close-ups; the *Inquirer* didn't dare show panoramic shots of their *mitings de avance*; readers

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

would unfavorably compare them with the huge crowd Danding had assembled at the Luneta. Imelda did her part in the anti-Cojuangco campaign; she attacked Danding for “trying to break up her family” (the children preferred Danding), and the *Inquirer* even spared front-page space for a story describing Miriam’s psychiatric treatments. There was no doubt whom the *Inquirer* regarded as enemies #1 and #2, but it was badly torn between its loyalty to the Palace and Mitra partisans.

Chapter XVII

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

Though the PNP suffered a defeat by the NPA in Cagayan province on the tenth, losing 15 men, election day itself passed peacefully, fulfilling COMELEC predictions, and with weather good throughout the country, an estimated 85% of those entitled cast their ballots without any serious disturbances. Voters even managed to vote for President, vice President and 24 Senators, along with Congressmen and local government officials without serious delays or hitches. Counting was another matter.

On the twelfth, the results began to trickle in, but one COMELEC official estimated that it might take a week or more before the results were known. The big surprise was that Miriam Santiago sprang into the lead, not only in Manila and its suburbs, but with a substantial showing in various precincts throughout the country. She was trailed closely by Ramos, despite another last minute warning by Cardinal Sin that Ramos was unacceptable to the church. Cojuangco was running a poor third, and Mitra a still poorer fourth, but less than 5% of the vote had been counted in 24 hours. Manila and Makati Mayors Lopez and Binay, both backed by the Palace, jumped into an early lead, but Lopez quickly lost ground to General Lim, while Mathay was beating Simon, the Palace choice, in Quezon City.

By and large, T.V., with a full supply of computer paraphernalia, did a good job reporting objectively except for a Channel 2 program which attempted to show that the Americans had dictated the results of every election since World War II, and probably were influencing the present one, though the commentators weren't yet sure which candidate the U.S. favored. They would have to wait until the winner was announced before they would attribute (her/his) victory to the Americans. If the media practitioners had not developed either bursitis or tennis elbow from patting themselves on the back in their orgy of self-congratulations on the peaceful election, it would have been a wonder, but the upbeat mood was replaced within 48 hours by frantic efforts on their part to warn themselves and voters that no "trends" had been established, since only 8% of the vote had been tallied. This contrasted sharply with the 1986 elections, when pro-Cory "trends" quickly became results, without the necessity for counting the last 30-odd percentage of the votes cast. The media, local and world-wide, in 1986 simply awarded the election to Saint Cory, and declared the Monster Marcos a loser long before most of the rural votes had been counted. Why the reversal of tactics? In 1986, the media favored the challenger, but in 1992 the Palace's choice, in each case asserting a moral superiority for their candidate over his opponent(s).

However, what *was* clear in the first 36 hours was that for the first time in Philippine history, vote-getting *party* machinery had broken down. Mitra, who

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

had the ruling Party (LDP) machine in his grasp, and Cojuangco, who had constructed a new but formidable machinery culminating in a massive Luneta rally, both saw their machines fly apart no matter how liberally they had been greased. Those who had bet on machinery and image (including the author) lost out; those who had gambled on popularity won a stunning victory, with movie star Joseph Estrada the clear winner as vice-President, and Miriam Santiago, the populist, narrowly leading Ramos for the Presidency. Alarmed, the Palace occupant acted to put a stop to her opponent's bandwagon strategy, one which Cory had herself so effectively utilized in 1986. COMELEC forbade the use of the term "trend", and refused to publish anything but its own selected media press count despite widespread stoppages in counting that it imposed. Mrs. Aquino was still fighting for her candidate, and some of the media seemed equally determined to keep Miriam out of the Presidency.

Only the RAM publicly charged that the government would cheat to make Ramos win, but the suspicion was nonetheless widespread. The RAM alleged that the bombings in Manila and Bulacan were the work of government agents in order to manipulate the election results favorably to Ramos. (The AFP blamed the RAM.) The *Malaya* headline was: "RAM says it will strike if administration cheats." RAM also charged that the Media Citizens Quick Count (MQC) was U.S.-financed, and the Embassy PAO's comment that this was "bull" had little effect. The most curious report of all came from Washington, where F. Sionil Jose, Filipino novelist, had said that he preferred a military coup to a minority president.

On the 16th, Amando Doronila in the *Chronicle* reacted ecstatically to the early returns. He trumpeted that machine politicians Cojuangco and Mitra had been defeated. The youth, activist and idealist, had taken over politics, relegating both billionaire and *trapo* to the scrap heap, along with INK Bishop Manalo and Cardinal Sin. In his view, both Miriam and Ramos were without machines, though how he could ignore the palace party, with its built-in machine consisting of a record-high number of government employees, who had been instructed to vote for Ramos, was hard to understand. . . In Iloilo, her home town, Miriam Santiago launched an appeal to her supporters to take to the streets to protest cheating that she said had reduced her to second place, but she failed to offer any evidence, so it sounded to many people like sour grapes. Cojuangco, in a press conference, still professed confidence he would win, and urged his supporters to remain vigilant but await the final count. At the end of the day, with 18% of the 25 million votes tallied, the score was Ramos 965,639, Santiago 845,543, Cojuangco 676,362, Mitra 566,800, Salonga 417,325, Marcos 407,603 and Laurel 101,828. Estrada, with over a million votes, was ahead of second-placer Fernan by nearly 200,000 votes for vice President. Since the national figures now included large inputs from all over the country, there was little prospect that rank order would change as the count preceded.

Ninez Cacho-Olivares (*Inquirer*, 5/17/92) a lonely voice, called for a new election because of the strong suspicion that government employees, heeding

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

the President's call to work for Ramos, had probably cheated. In any case, a President Ramos would face opposition by 75% of the electorate. She thought Miriam's call for demonstrations was only natural: "One suspects that it no longer matters that she does not sit in the presidential throne. What matters to her and other candidates, who will be behind her, is that Ramos does not sit as president." Alunan, Ramos' mouthpiece, contented himself with predicting another nervous breakdown for Miriam.

A Parting Message from Ambassador Wisner

Though not advertised as such, when Ambassador Wisner addressed the American Chamber of Commerce in Cebu on the sixteenth, he was leaving a final economic message for Filipinos, which, oversimplified, was: get the government out of business. As reported by the *Inquirer*, he urged the next government to emphasize infrastructure:

"No job a government can do is more important than providing infrastructure. And no piece of infrastructure is critical in the Philippine today than the provision of electrical power," he pointed out.

Government should not rely too much on foreign loans, Wisner said, and instead pass urgent tax measures to boost government revenues. . .

He also saw the need for the restructuring of the Central Bank which at present cannot act without authority to make the economy function properly.

The CB's debts must be absorbed by the government to allow it to play its role in stabilizing the economy, . . .

The Government Always Cheats

It took Adrian Cristobal, the cynic, who had served the Garcia and Marcos governments, to pronounce the blunt truth about Filipino national elections: the government always cheats, but not always successfully. The columnist estimated that the "equity of the incumbent" amounted at least to 500,000. So there was justification in Miriam's threat to take to the streets, even if, with only 20% of the votes counted, she was guilty of jumping the gun. Cristobal wrote in the *Inquirer* (5/18/92), complimenting Mitra for conceding:

Mitra, the realist, knows what it's all about. Nothing can be done unless in some future time, politicians would be struck blind by lightning so that they could see that the electoral counting system is too flawed to be really trusted.

The opposition must always win by a landslide to garner a respectable count.

And so if we, in our supineness, can live with that, why can't Miriam?

After the First Week of Counting

The shenanigans at the MCQC commenced after the first four days, when the tally showed Miriam Santiago with a wide lead over her opponents. The Palace couldn't tolerate that, so the Media Citizens Quick Count (MCQC) set aside

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

Metro Manila votes for later tabulation and shifted to reports on voting in districts where Ramos was strong. Thus, while the Metro Manila results, *after one week*, showed less than 20% of the vote cast, Ramos was posted as leading by over 300,000. Cojuangco was a strong third, but was also being downgraded by the same tactic. General Abadía was constrained to acknowledge that there were “disturbing delays” in hearing from areas known to be Santiago and Cojuangco strongholds. This admission occurred on May 19, when Ramos was describing to reporters what would be his program as President. (Estrada to have an “important assignment”, Miriam as “adviser”, and Cory to be Ambassador-at-large.) The public began to realize that Miriam or Danding could still be President, and that only Estrada could be sure of election. There was still fear that RAM might intervene, but General Abadía and de Villa both assured the public that RAM/YOU were too weak to represent a credible threat. The MCQC then concentrated on the Senatorial race, recording votes from what appeared to be the whole country, down to the fortieth placer. It showed the three leaders (Sotto in front) with over 9,000,000 votes (compared to 4,500,000 counted for the three leading Presidential candidates). Demands were heard that the MCQC be closed down, but they were rejected with the reminder that its count was not official, but only to correct what would otherwise(?) be erroneous information. COMELEC figures, which could run a week or two behind the MCQC, would in the end be the only official count. So, it was argued, any discrepancies in the MCQC would be self-correcting as the vote approached 100%. (This explanation however excited suspicion that there would be repeated the 1986 tactic by Cory’s NAMFREL, which stopped at less than 70% of the vote counted.) Another real election surprise was the strength shown by Imelda Marcos. With 32% of the votes recorded, she had 856,464, and added to Cojuangco’s 1,323,235, their supporters clearly outnumbered not only Santiago, at 1,446,133, but Ramos at 1,748,082. Salonga had slipped to sixth place.

The *Globe* (5/17/92), very anti-Cojuangco, strangely had something favorable to say about him:

[Cojuangco’s] showing at the polls is almost as impressive as Miriam’s. Not a show of people power at the polls, but an example of what our leading columnist Yen Makabenta calls just plain “good” politics, meaning politics which delivers. His rallies in the provinces were mammoth affairs. He campaigned like a trooper, physically and mentally.

He revealed an insidious brilliance in tying down Peping Cojuangco in Tarlac by fielding another Cojuangco against him, thereby depriving the vaunted organization of the LDP of his direction. His gargantuan *miting de avance* in Manila with 1.5 million attending ends all reference to either Ninoy Aquino’s funeral or Cory Aquino’s civil disobedience rally.

But now he says something which reveals a gap in his otherwise solid performance. No research or a lamentable disregard for the truth.

He accuses the MCQC of having a secret room in which all the cheating is taking place that we don’t see on the floor of the De La Salle Greenhills gym.

Danding had been remarkably low-key in his assertions of wrongdoing, and this particular charge was undoubtedly nonsense, but he was in fact reacting to the

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

MCQC's transparent tactic of delaying the results from Metro Manila while posting the count from pro-Ramos bailiwicks. Not until May 19th, for example, were the results reported from Tarlac, where Danding, as expected, scored a crushing personal victory, though he lost the Governorship to the beautiful Tingting Cojuangco. The result in next-door Pampanga, where he lost heavily, had been reported two days earlier.

There were major developments on May 20 (Ramos 2,560,121; Santiago 1,951,922; Cojuangco 1,857,383). Miriam Santiago presented legal and statistical evidence of fraud, but Haydee Yorac, probably the COMELEC's most respected member, questioned her charges in a deliberately careful verbal formulation: She had found "no overwhelming proof of massive fraud". (The two limiting adjectives screamed for attention.) More important was the growing public conviction, despite frantic administration efforts to portray Ramos as the certain winner, that the MCQC was timing its posted results to show an unbeatable Ramos trend, emphasizing results in far-away Southeastern Mindanao (where retired General Magno, a Ramos crony, had gone to "coordinate"), Central Cebu and the Ilocos region, known Ramos strongholds, and holding back the figures from Metro Manila and the Southern Tagalog region, where Miriam was very strong. The *Inquirer* (5/21/92) gave space if not prominence to examples of fraud charged by Alexander Padilla, Santiago's legal representative, and to a statement by her press representative Maribel Ongpin:

... fraud may be committed without evidence of dead bodies, blood on the floor or even dramatic ballot box snatching and overt terrorism, ...

This cliché of evil election maneuvering is old fashioned and obsolete and has been replaced by more sophisticated and non-violent means, ...

Far more specific was Luis Beltran, in the *Standard* (5/20/92):

For ten hours yesterday, the MCQC tabulation center received some 3-million votes and was still "processing" them at press time at 4:30 p.m. (yesterday)—and had not released the same in the ten-hour period.

The sudden addition of that many votes would radically change the make-up of the MCQC tally, perhaps even changing the rankings, but even after inquiries by media as to why the 3-million votes were not being added to the tally, the MCQC experts said nothing.

It is that kind of thing which has made a lot of people suspicious of the way the slow count is being done.

So panic-stricken was Max Soliven, in the *Star* (5/21/92), at Cojuangco's surge of votes, that he accused Danding poll-watchers of stealing Mitra's votes after the Speaker's watchers had withdrawn. Max would probably even endorse a *coup* or martial law in order to frustrate the Cojuangco bid. He was representative of most of the Manila media, who were ready to die for Democracy, but repudated an election that produced a hated winner. Worst of all in their view, there was little doubt that the Marcos faction was the largest in the country (Danding 17.6%, Imelda 11.1, totalling 28.7%, compared to Ramos' 24.3%). Still it was equally true that the anti-Marcos factions (all others) were together far more numerous, and if it came to violence, Cojuangco would probably be squeezed out, one way or another. Antonio Valdez, a Cojuangco mouthpiece,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

predicted:

... when Cojuangco overtakes Ramos the MCQC will stop its tabulation by giving "convenient" excuses like technical difficulties.

They will never allow Mr. Cojuangco to overtake Ramos. I expect them to stop counting ... when the regions where we expect to win big will not be counted, ...

.. As the long count dragged on, tension was growing.

Manipulation at the MCQC

According to statistics published on May 23, or *twelve* days after the election, an astonishing 83.06% of the votes in Metro Manila, 61.56% in Central Mindanao, 53.72% in Southern Tagalog and 47.64% in Central Luzon had still not been tabulated, while results from various remote provinces had been counted. Totals showed Ramos leading by some 562,000 votes over Cojuangco, now in second place with a slim margin of 31,000 votes over Miriam Santiago. President Aquino confidently announced that it was now clearly indicated that her candidate would win, and that preparations for his proclamation should be hastened. This was outrageous *chutzpah*, and Danding said so, while Miriam left off leading demonstrations and announced she was beginning a hunger strike.

Only a few cases of outright fraud had surfaced, but MCQC's failure to tabulate votes from provinces where Santiago and Cojuangco were strong while rushing results into computers from Ramos strongholds was clearly manipulation on somebody's part. Theoretically, as observed above, the process at MCQC was self-correcting in the long run, but no one had forgotten that in 1986, the last 30-odd percent of the votes were never counted; Cory was simply proclaimed. Miriam's choice of a hunger strike was perhaps unfortunate in seeming to be an irrational act, but Danding, in a long T.V. sound bite, sounded very angry and determined. (Those non-tabulated votes at the MCQC probably included more Santiago than Cojuangco votes, but their supporters had a common cause). Adrian Cristobal (*Inquirer*, 5/21/92) in a very sarcastic column, pretended to see nothing wrong that Democracy, represented by Cory and Ramos, seemed entitled to ignore voting results if they were cast in favor of those they condemned as non-Democrats.

In sharp contrast to the vote for the Presidency, counting of the votes for vice President and Senators was proceeding smoothly and swiftly. Joseph Estrada and entertainer/politician Sotto were runaway topnotchers. Anti-American Senatorial candidates were doing poorly.

The two principal columnists of the *Star*, Art Borjal and publisher Max Soliven, were respectively apprehensive and outraged by Sunday May 24, even if MCQC figures put Ramos ahead by slightly more than a million votes over Cojuangco and Santiago, and Ramos was still talking about his government-to-be. Borjal wrote:

That jarring letter of newspaper publisher Raul Locsin to Comelec Chairman Christian Monod, hinting at possible tampering of some Certificates of

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

Canvass, sent shock waves to many concerned Filipinos. Is this a portent of things to come? Will this trigger off acrimonious and prolonged debates at the Batasan when the electoral canvass begins? . . .

Many people are worried, too, that the MCQC might not be able to complete its parallel count before or a few days after May 25. So many clouds of doubt will be cast on the integrity of the electoral process should that happen.

Soliven expostulated:

Even though election day, May 11, may have been orderly and comparatively peaceful, its aftermath has been disgraceful. Here we are, *two weeks* into the counting, and only HALF of the 26 to 27 million votes cast have been tallied and canvassed.

What's worse, by Friday night only 16 percent of the votes from the National Capital Region (NCR), means the ballot-rich Metro Manila area with about 4.5 million voters, had been officially tabulated. . .

When the canvassers in the NCR itself are slow to report, the suspicion arises that cheating in the form of the slick method named "BAWAS-DAGDAG" (reduce and add) is underway. It's no secret that "shopping" is going on in certain areas. . . In some places, post election "ballots" are actually for sale.

However, neither Borjal nor Soliven charged outright bad faith to the MCQC or the COMELEC. Cacho-Olivares (*Inquirer*, 5/23/92), did:

. . . no matter how much one complains and how much documentary evidence is presented to the Comelec, Comelec appears more bent on dismissing these complaints and evidence of electoral fraud as "inconclusive." At the same time, lame excuses like fatigue and lack of sleep are given more weight by the Comelec. . .

In a country populated by a large number of cheats and thieves, it is highly unlikely that massive electoral fraud cannot be committed or that frauds reported are isolated cases.

Editorially, the *Inquirer* was angry that the treasurers of Manila and Caloocan and even suburban towns in the NCR had not given the MCQC copies of their tallies, but it blamed those officials, not the MCQC or the COMELEC. (The NCR was Miriam's heartland, and on May 23 she entered the hospital to begin a hunger strike in protest.)

The weekend of May 23/24 brought major modifications in public opinion, registered by admissions in the Palace's supporter, the *Inquirer*, that the MCQC figures had indeed become suspect. In an editorial headlined "Fair is Still Fair," it suggested (5/25/92) that Cory's plea the new President be proclaimed by July 1 must yield to actions that would legitimize the proclaimed winner. The newspaper's key paragraph warned that the admitted MCQC irregularities

gives credence to the charge that some quarters—whom Miriam's camp identifies only as government officials who desperately want to hold on to their posts, and not Ramos or Cory—are trying to see first how much Miriam leads in the capital region so that they may know by how much to pad the provincial votes. Count those votes now, before it is too late. Too late, that is, to salvage an impending Ramos victory from a lingering cloud of doubt.

The most significant aspect of this comment was that the *Inquirer*, with charity or chivalry, attributed no skullduggery to the President or Ramos, but only to their supporters. Yet when the three leading Senatorial candidates had amassed

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

over 17,000,000 recorded votes, the three leading Presidential candidates had registered only 8 million. There were probably at least 8 million votes for president uncounted, theoretically more than enough to make winners of Santiago, Cojuangco, or even Mitra. However, Mitra had conceded and was making no claims that he had been cheated.

Wisner Advocates Privatization, says AFP Must Pay for Modernization

Impending departure did not slow U.S. Ambassador Wisner down. He accepted an invitation to participate in the popular T.V. program *Firing Line*, choosing as interviewers Teddy Benigno and Teddy Locsin, thus excluding Larry Henares, who sought revenge in his column. Adrian Cristobal, in a lurid example of nationalistic overkill, screamed that the Ambassador had "issued directives" to the Filipinos with his suggestions that the NAPOCOR be privatized, that the banking system be opened up, and petroleum prices be deregulated, "all of which are dear to the American free trade ideology except when it applies to their own protection." Cristobal then delightedly quoted at length from French Ambassador Gaissot's recent speech to Rotary which had rejected American criticism of the EC trade bloc, "which was more liberal than Japan or the U.S. Government." Socialist France's Ambassador also retroactively attacked what Christobal called Reaganism as "a policy that ignores certain elements of the population." Henares, present at the taping of Wisner's T.V. appearance, found somehow sinister Wisner's reply to Locsin's off-camera question on why Ambassador Platt had been replaced by Wisner on the bases negotiations at the last minute. Henares was particularly indignant that the Ambassador had said that the Senate's decision on the bases treaty was not representative of national opinion.

Ambassador Wisner then chose a Mutual Defense Board meeting to tell the Filipinos they must expect less military aid (which meant that the AFP would have to finance most of its own modernization), but he pledged U.S. loyalty to the Philippine-American defense treaty: the U.S. intended to remain a Pacific power, so that it might ask for "continued military access to Philippine military bases."

The Congress Begins its Canvass (I)

The weekend of May 30/June 1 saw the MCQC count still less than 80% complete, but the Ramos supporters in Congress were already intriguing for the Speakership and the Senate Presidency, where the prospects of a return to the pre-martial law scenario, including frequent reorganizations of the Senate, with its attendant paralysis of Congressional action, seemed predictable. As more of the votes from the National Capital Region and other areas in the Manila straggled in, Miriam Santiago narrowed the Ramos lead to less than 900,000, but it seemed unlikely that she would overtake him. Miriam hau

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

given up her hunger strike after writing a widely denounced appeal to President Bush and turned again to demonstrations. Attention shifted to the Congress, whose proclamation, based on Certificates of Canvass from provinces and cities, would eventually result in proclamation of the new President. There, a stable of chiefly Cojuangco lawyers promised a lastditch fight, even though Miriam might be the ultimate beneficiary rather than Danding. Since this promised to be a long and bruising struggle, attention briefly shifted to the current *TIME*'s feature article picturing the Philippines as a basket case.

TIME Gives Up on the Philippines

Most people would learn of the gloomy *TIME* assessment through their favorite columnists. Bishop Claver wrote in the *Chronicle* (5/29/92):

Many of us were riled up with the "Time" feature story on the Philippine elections. The question it emblazoned on its cover "Can anyone fix the Philippines?" and the naked and hunger-bloated child suggestively symbolizing the country were most tendentious to say the least. . .

Those insinuations and the induced post-election confusion do actually come down to the same thing: Our cheaters. Our "fixers". Not those who cheat in the vote-counting and reporting only—but in all other matters of national life as well. It is they who mess up things, who need fixing the most.

Vicente Pacis in the *Inquirer* (5/30/92) told the Filipinos that the changed attitude of the U.S. was the predictable result of America-bashing:

Having achieved the goal of finally ridding ourselves of United States with the rejection last year by the Senate of the proposed treaty of friendship, cooperation and security, we must have expected a reciprocal reaction on the part of America.

Pacis quoted Nicholas Eberstadt: "From a strategic point of view, the Philippines lost a game of bluff and painted itself into a corner." *TIME* added editorially that the *Inquirer* columnist had quoted the ever-optimistic Filipino economist Bernardo Villegas, but Pacis ended, as he began, with the question "What else did we expect?"

The Darkness Spreads

Those who were tired of following the MCQC and the undignified but fully traditional struggle for posts in the new Congress, or lamenting the latest *TIME*'s despairing assessment of their society, were cursing the government for the calamitous non-performance of the National Power Corporation, and placing the blame squarely where it belonged: on President Aquino, whose administration was ending with far less electricity available than when it began. From four hour brownouts, the outages had climbed to six, to eight and even twelve hours, as more and more power stations conked out from poor maintenance and overload. Cacho-Olivares (*Inquirer*, 5/30/92) was savage:

More than five and a half years ago, Aquino and her officials were informed by energy experts of an impending power crisis, due to her decision

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

of mothballing the nuclear plant. . .

Did this stupidly incompetent administration bother to rush the construction of other alternative sources of energy to alleviate, at the very least, the energy problem?

Not on your life! Aquino and her officials did not even bother to ensure that the existing power plants are at least being properly maintained.

Instead of addressing the energy problem, she used up her energy in getting her anointed, Fidel Ramos, elected as her successor.

Abaya, in the *Chronicle* (5/29/92) had left off being chivalrous toward Aquino. He reminded her that the Marcos administration *did* have a successful energy policy:

President Aquino cannot blame the dictator Marcos for this catastrophe. The Marcos government had a well-thought out energy policy that successfully achieved its goal of reducing our dependence on imported energy to 55%. . .

It was President Aquino who scrapped the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (620 mw) on the advice of her human rights lawyer-advisers, without replacing it with sufficient alternatives to take up the slack in the energy program.

It was also President Aquino who abolished the Ministry of Energy, merely because it was a creation of Marcos and was suspected of being a vehicle for massive kickbacks from petroleum suppliers. It would have been more sensible to retain the Energy Ministry—to strategize an energy policy—and put trusted aides at its head.

. . . as head of government, President Aquino has command responsibility, and she cannot escape blame for this monumental failure. President Aquino owes the entire country a profound apology.

Abadia Warns RAM (YOU) and NPA

Chief of Staff Abadia once again reported (5/3/92) that AFP undercover agents had reported that the RAM (YOU) and the NPA were making contact in order to jointly block the proclamation of the new President if as expected, it should be ex-General Fidel Ramos. As usual, Abadia claimed that the AFP had the situation well in hand. In a remarkable addendum, whose significance could not have escaped him, Abadia noted that the AFP's absentee ballot results (most AFP personnel, lacking a fixed address, vote by absentee ballot) showed that Santiago and Cojuangco had ended up first and second. RAM/YOU replied, denying the Abadia accusation, which it said was intended to blacken its image.

The Congressional Canvass (II)

On June 1, the *Star's* Soliven was outraged that the Congress was slow to proclaim Ramos (who had just proclaimed himself), even if the votes from areas where Ramos was weak were not yet counted by the MCQC (50% in the NCR), let alone canvassed by the Congress. The man who claimed to be the White Knight of Philippine journalism insisted that everybody *knew* Ramos had won. Cacho-Olivares in the *Inquirer* differed explosively: "Why the rush? A quick proclamation does not serve the national interest, only the interests of Ramos

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

and his patrons in Malacañang.” Ramos himself was playing the amiable winner, being photographed giving blood to the Red Cross, and appearing at the coffee shops, where he jovially embraced Ponce Enrile and joked with Senatorial winner Tatad. Meanwhile, Las Vegas Mining Executive Robert Curtis threatened to sue Imelda for a share of the “trillions” of Yamashita gold that he said he had helped locate, and predicted blood on Manila’s streets, provoked by the losers in the election.

Pinatubo’s Lahar Inundates Pampanga and Tarlac

Seasonal rains beginning the last days in May had by June fifth loosened the tons of lahar deposited in the slopes about Pampanga and Tarlac, breaking temporary dams constructed to arrest its flow, and the Palace declared a state of calamity in the Cojuangco/Aquino heartland. The jewel in the Cojuangco crown, Hacienda Luisita, was itself threatened, and several barrios had been covered in the predicted path of the mud flows, encouraging some of the superstitious Filipino again to speak darkly of Cory being *malas* (bad luck).

President Aquino Finally Admits an Error

Cory Quino has consistently refused to concede that anything she has done or not done during her six-plus years in office may have been wrong or mistaken. It was therefore a great concession when over the first weekend in June, with brownouts lasting from four to eight hours, she admitted that she had might have made an error in abolishing the Marcos-established Department of Energy (which though accused of corruption, had functioned very effectively), and canceling six major non-nuclear power projection (since anything that Marcos has authorized *had* to be corrupt!)

When Enrique Zobel published a story that Marcos had in 1988 planned to establish a \$35 billion foundation funded by the Yamashita gold hoard, and that if he were permitted to return from Honolulu, the foundation would pay off the Philippines’ foreign indebtedness, the President was her usual contradictory self, first saying that Marcos only wanted to come out smelling like a rose, then that she wanted to see the money before permitting his return, and next that the story was old hat. The legend of Yamashita’s gold hoard had been pretty well discredited by 1992, but not the belief in Marcos’ gold, as shown by the Aquino government’s zeal in digging up Fort Santiago and the Romualdez house in Leyte. Robert Curtis’ allegations of Marcos’ treasure (see above) also witnessed to lingering interest. Zobel had said that Marcos had shown him actual certificates of deposit in Swiss banks, but the Filipino tycoon had had no second meeting with the desperately-ill ex-President, while in a later conversation that Zobel had with Imelda Marcos, she claimed that she knew nothing of any such plans.

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

The Congressional Canvass (III)

By June 9, when 59% of the presidential votes had been counted, the COMELEC proclaimed the 24 Senatorial winners. (The leading eight for six years, the ninth through sixteenth for four years, and the remaining eight for two years.) Ramos had 2,800,385 votes, or 22.66% of the votes cast. He was closely followed by Miriam Santiago with 2,734,012, or just 66,373 ballots behind. Cojuangco was third with 2,183,50. Some excitement was caused by what Speaker Mitra called a SWAT raid (denied by Ramos supporters) which transferred 917 ballot boxes from the Senate to the House, and COMELEC sent additional Marines to the Congress to guard against reports there would be demonstrations which might threaten an orderly canvass. Cojuangco asked COMELEC to authorize a recount of the Cebu, Iloilo and Pampanga COCs, saying that if they were shown to be authentic, he would withdraw all his protests.

By June 12, the Congressional canvass had covered 86% of the nation's precincts, and Ramos had increased his lead to 559,143 over Santiago, with Cojuangco behind Santiago by roughly the same margin. The most important new information was that the Congress had ordered 45 election officials brought "bodily if necessary" to the Congress. They had not sent forward their COC's.

Independence Day Celebrations

Independence Day, June 12, had been heralded by Adrian Cristobal in the *Inquirer* by a column urging his countrymen to ignore (like a bad dream) the entire period of American occupation, briefly interrupted by the Japanese, from 1898 to 1992. In a low-key Independence Day celebration, President Aquino, headlined by the *Inquirer* as "unfazed by sniper threats", reiterated once again her assertions that her regime was stable, appealing to the nation to support what the press, coached by COMELEC, now called "President-apparent" General Ramos. The *Bulletin's* lead paragraph summarized the President's speech: "President Aquino expressed confidence in the political stability of the country and the strength of its democratic institutions saying that no coup attempt can endanger the freedom restored during the EDSA Revolution in 1986." The press also reported however that Cory was still stubbornly pursuing her court case against *Standard* columnist Luis Beltran for alleging that she "hid under her bed" during the attempted military coup of 1989. The *Inquirer's* Olivares-Cacho not only disputed the President's assertion of stability (6/13/92) but seemingly even justified the past (or a present?) rebellion:

... what we should learn, even in our most passionless moments, is that no leader, whether elected democratically or not, should be allowed to stay in power if he continues to serve a people as badly as Aquino.

Not even a peaceful transfer of political power is worth it.

Let us no longer be lulled by honeyed words of government. Let us demand command responsibility and accountability from the next president. . .

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

The Bulletin's Jess Bigornia, however, felt (6/12/92) that the Republic still faced dangers that should be dealt with cautiously:

Uncertainty over the outcome of the recent presidential election is driving the nation paranoid. Talks about coups d'état, civil disturbances fill the air as the Congress is repeatedly stymied in its canvass of poll results. Indeed, democratic processes are strained to near breaking point. Before the predicted storm breaks out, this column can only add to the counsel of perceptive leaders to remain calm lest terrorism in its deadliest form break out. . .

He warned against disorder and terrorism:

A word of caution to those who would follow calls to the barricades is, therefore, in order. Sooner than they expect, the Congress will proclaim the winner in the presidential poll. Regardless of what its results may be, the Constitution, defective as it may be, provides for remedies, for redress of grievances. Let the citizenry keep its peace and, instead work for national unit in these times of adversity.

Bigornia somberly analyzed the boiling public mood:

Like a fractured dam, the recent elections had released a flood of loathing against the outgoing national administration. The near total breakdown of public services—law and order, soaring prices, unemployment, power and water outages, among others—are heaped on the heads of lameduck officials. . .

He beseeched "President-apparent" Ramos to distance himself completely from the Aquino administration (which had elected him), entirely replacing Mrs. Aquino's corrupt officials, and appointing a cabinet without any hold-overs.

Over the Independence Day weekend, Santiago's call for another Presidential election in August was brushed off by COMELEC, and the Congressional Canvass limped forward, registering over 93% of the votes cast, and still giving Ramos a 600,000-plus margin over Santiago, while Imelda Marcos urged support for Ramos (confirming her continued enmity toward Cojuangco). Listening to the AFP's alleged assassination plots (against Cory, against Ramos) and awaiting the results of the drawn-out canvass were wearing people's nerves thin. The *Inquirer* (6/14/92) complained editorially:

. . . the longer a state of unease, of uncertainty, is perpetuated, the easier it would be to institute a state of panic that would require, for example, the use of emergency powers. In which event, the military is usually called in to maintain peace and order. . .

In the wake of an election count so slow it has become laughable, not only to us natives but also to other people of the world, a general disarray in basic services in a country whose *haute monde* wouldn't be caught dead wearing last month's fashions, and kill plots that flap their shadowy wings, what else is there to think?

Plenty of nervousness remained, as an Abaya Column (*Chronicle*, 6/15/92) witnessed. Reacting to AFP reports of plotted assassinations, Abaya wondered if the mainstream military might be gearing up for a preventive takeover. He referred to the black propaganda against Danding:

The assassination plot is being laid at the doorstep of "a losing presidential candidate" who has "previously hired Israeli mercenaries." Only Danding Cojuangco fits this description: he is said to have used Israeli mercs to train

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

his private security force in his Bugsuk Island coconut hybrid breeding station during the Marcos years.

Renegade Army colonel Billy Bibit is supposed to be the chief operating officer for this enterprise and is said to have been paid P5 million as down payment for the hit.

Abaya dismissed the Danding threat as “defying all logic”, and emphasized that a Ramos assassination would wreck the constitutional process beyond repair. The mainstream military, not the rebel military, would most likely take over, with loyalties to neither Cory, nor Ramos, nor Miriam, nor Danding.

The columnist pointed out that an Anwar Sadat, rather than a Rajiv Gandhi scenario was more likely:

Whatever the truth or untruth about these assassination plots, one fact is incontrovertible, namely that President-apparent Fidel Ramos has many enemies who for different reasons, would want to liquidate him.

The President's Final Weeks (I)

A shocking example of President Aquino's lack of leadership in dealing with the energy problem was heard in early June by representatives of the incoming administration when being briefed by ADB officials. A 5.7 million ADB loan to the Philippine Government to finance a 600 MW coal-fired power generator plant at Masinloc, Zambales had gone untouched for *two years* because of local objections allegedly based on environmental considerations but actually amounting to blackmail by mango orchard owners. In the meantime, with not a spadeful of earth turned over, the government was running up interest charges that would greatly increase the project's cost. Under Marcos, this issue would have been quickly resolved. Reasonable compensation would have been offered, and the plant would have been built, whatever the local objections. In contrast, President Aquino on June 11, or two years later, masterfully “ordered” Zambales governor Deloso to “dissipate objections on the part of Masinloc residents”. She had her Manila flyovers, but not the 600 MW of power at Masinloc when she left office, and the spreading darkness simply emphasized the absence of national leadership.

However, the President was not idle. She pressed her legal suit against columnist Luis Beltran of the *Standard*, whom she said had accused her of “hiding under the bed” during the 1989 *putsch*. She again testified in court on June 14 (this time without cameras) that her reputation had been impugned by Beltran. This tempest in a teapot only had the effect of further diminishing her stature in the eyes of the public. Everyone understood that Beltran's quip was a figure of speech and that he had offered to apologize publicly. Cory was exhibiting her own variety of *machismo*—a stubborn determination to have her own way in a triviality. As always, she was less *macho* than *pikon* (thin-skinned).

On the economic front, the President suffered another blow when Caltex abandoned plans to construct another refinery, deciding instead to invest its P2 billion in Malaysia and Thailand. Caltex complained that the exportation of

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

profits permitted under Philippine law—18%—was too little when other nearby countries offered 25%. Another Caltex project, geothermal in the Cordillera, was also abandoned after the investment of a million dollars, for the same reason. On the other hand, there was some comfort for Cory when CRA and Western of Australia made known their intention to “invest heavily” in a CRA-Lepanto joint venture in Mountain Province and Davao.

The Congressional Canvass (IV)

The media were bitterly critical of Miriam Santiago, who still volubly complained she had been cheated and threatened demonstrations in retaliation. Why couldn't she be realistic, like the other candidates, who by June 18, had conceded? COMELEC had admitted that the official tabulation showed that there were “only” 5,280 excess precincts, but this, said COMELEC, even if not attributed to double counting, was not “massive fraud”; Miriam as usual was talking too much, and it was vital to get on with a Ramos government, which was the winner (with less than 24% of the vote). No one found it worthy of mention that Ramos' winning margin, with only 5 COC's missing, was at that point just a little over 500,000 votes, or what Adrian Cristobal had earlier written (see above) was what the administration party always awarded itself as the “equity of the incumbent”. As he had truly written, in the Philippines, the Opposition can win only by a landslide. Fraud or no, massive or minor, Cristobal (*Inquirer*, 6/18/92) said Miriam should now shut up, and like Mitra, Cojuangco and the others, take her lumps:

Discounting the naive, few Filipinos with any political experience will disagree with Miriam Defensor Santiago's assertion of fraud in the elections. That fraud was massive and systematic is also a logical conclusion, for that's what it take to win. But that she would have won in an immaculate count is arguable, for Danding Cojuangco could very well make the same claim.

It's also arguable that Miriam was the sole victim rather than all the other losers. . .

Cristobal explained that to eliminate fraud, the entire process of voting in the Philippines would have to be revised, a manifest impossibility: “This requires time and money, patience and energy, and the humility to accept the assistance of countries with advanced electoral systems.” Acknowledging that outside help was necessary was a bitter admission on the part of a super-nationalist, but it was easier than conceding that the Filipinos were incapable of installing *any* system that would choose honesty and legality over partisanship and family loyalty.

Danding Cojuangco had quite handsomely conceded a day or so earlier, and on the 17th, he met for four hours with Ramos and exited radiating good will and saying he hoped to contribute his knowledge of trade and agriculture to a Ramos administration. It was all over but the shouting, but there would be a great deal of that before the inauguration. Willy Ng, in the *Bulletin* (6/20/92) noted that the two principals (Ramos and Cojuangco) were intending to cooperate, but that within the Cojuangco camp, it was argued that NPC should consti-

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

tute an opposition.

After a week of successive announcements that several days would be required for debate, the Congress, prodded by Mitra, on June 22, with almost indecent speed, suddenly proclaimed Ramos and Estrada as President and vice President. Ramos was credited with 5,340,839 votes (23.58%), a margin of 874,655 over Santiago. Estrada had 6,737,215 votes, or 33% of the votes cast, 2,229,951 more than Fernan. Token Opposition protests were voiced by Cojuangco and Santiago supporters. In the Senate, only Senators Maceda and Osmeña voted against the proclamation, and Sotero Laurel abstained. Of the 129 members of the House who attended the joint session, 106 voted in favor of the proclamation, two against, and 21 abstained. The requests of Cojuangco and Santiago lawyers for examination of returns from selected precincts were brushed aside.

Some asked why the rush? Mrs. Aquino still had eight days left in office, but after more than a month of counting, everyone except Miriam Santiago wanted to get on with government, whatever the number of votes allegedly stolen. Since no one had come forward with evidence of "massive fraud", and since everyone but Miriam had agreed to regard Ramos as President-elect, it was more productive for everyone else to begin scrambling for advantage in a Ramos presidency. Moreover, and this was a major factor largely unacknowledged in public—not to be made able to proclaim a President after forty days of counting made the Philippines look ridiculous in the eyes of the world. As usual, the question of face was conclusive. The Supreme Court cooperated, rejecting Santiago's request for postponing or setting aside the electoral verdict.

The days immediately before the Ramos inauguration were spent in speculations regarding cabinet selections and preliminary maneuvers in the Congress to select a Speaker and a Senate President. A reconciled President, now that her candidate was about to succeed her, generously invited Imelda Marcos to attend the Inaugural ceremonies either as the wife of an ex-President or as a defeated candidate for the Presidency. (Imelda refused.) This singular example of presidential generosity allowed Cristobal (*Inquirer*, 6/24/92) to call attention to "the end of an era":

This is an era frozen by the outgoing administration's desire to perpetuate the Marcos period as the Dark Ages of Philippine history; a transparent technique which enables the said administration to excuse its shortcomings and abuse its privileges, on the theory that no blunder, no venality, could equal the 20 years it succeeded.

Winners and Losers

As always, there were more losers than winners in the May 1992 elections. Heading the losers' list were the Laurels. The vice President proved to be the choice for President of less than three percent(!) of the voters, and his brother Sotero Laurel was not re-elected to the Senate. Another at the top of the losers' list was Marcelo Fernan, who had given up the position of Chief Justice to run,

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

he thought, for President, but instead ended up a defeated candidate for the position of vice President. The Osmeñas of Cebu were also losers: they were trounced for vice President and Governor; one barely made it to the Senate. Speaker Mitra, double-crossed by his President and Party, was (temporarily) retired from politics. Most humiliated of all, perhaps, was Cardinal Sin, who had dangerously over-played his hand, and had been repudiated. Even the Presidential winner, Fidel Ramos, was the choice of only one out of four voters, while the fabulously popular vice Presidential victor, Senator Estrada, won only one in three voters.

In a paradoxical sense, the only winner was Miriam Santiago, whose showing astounded the experts. Underfunded and probably cheated of more votes than any other candidate, scorned and derided by the media, she came close to winning without a machine. Equally paradoxically, one of the winners was also Imelda Marcos, who obtained over 10% of the vote despite the contempt and the disdain in which she was held by President Aquino and her bashing in the media. Her principal accomplishment, however, was denying Danding Cojuangco a probable victory. Cojuangco lost, but remained in the running to the last, and continued a force to be reckoned with in the future, particularly if the five NPC Senators and forty-eight Congressmen continue to look to him for leadership, or if the KBL, loyal to Imelda, should later coalesce with the NPC.

How much President Aquino should be regarded as a winner was arguable. Her candidate, for whom she had battled as for no other objective in her six-plus years of power, had won, but she was leaving in darkness and lamented by only her cronies. In achieving the victory of her anointed, she had not only bled the national treasury, but had sown dragon's teeth for her successor, the choice of less than one voter in four, unacceptable to the church and with bitter enemies among the military as well as the insurgent Left, which swore continued enmity.

The Ramos Inaugural

Rain was falling as the new president was inaugurated on June 30. The several thousands of plainclothed security personnel in the crowd were invisible, and the ceremonies passed quietly in what was an unprecedentedly low-key inaugural, attended by a minimum number of distinguished visitors from abroad. In the absence of pomp and circumstance, President Ramos spoke modestly but forcefully, apologizing for lack of eloquence and rather awkwardly halting repeatedly to wait for applause, in what the entertainment world would have called "milking the audience". Still, Ramos undoubtedly projected successfully the image that he sought—down to earth, serious, conciliatory toward political opponents, but determined to slay the perpetual Filipino dragons of corruption, favoritism and government non-performance which had so conspicuously flourished under his predecessor.

In a precedent-breaking decision, that predecessor sat next to him on the stage, a move which had been deplored by most commentators when it was rumored,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

but on which she or her special cronies had insisted. Her presence was prejudicial to launching a new presidency with a stamp of its own, and called attention to the incoming President's debt to his outgoing, discredited predecessor. The retention of six of her cabinet members in his announced cabinet weakened the image that he had taken such pains to cultivate—that his regime would not be a carbon copy of his sponsor's.

The outstanding impression that President Ramos created when he assumed office was that he was genuinely determined to unify his people. Whether a victor elected by only 24% of the voters was well-placed to achieve that purpose, it was clearly a necessity. In external affairs, the new President promised to conciliate old friends but also to pursue the Manglapus line of greater attention to other than traditional partners (though he turned to bow to ex-Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan in the stands) and cooperate with other Southeast Asian neighbors. Only on economic policy did the President seem to stake out firm guidelines. In a section that might have been written by the IMF, the new President promised favorable conditions for foreign investment and abolish onerous tariff protection. The president-elect did not promise agrarian reform, focusing rather on land productivity and farmer income, a healthy change from Cory's demagogic promises which regularly went unfulfilled after they had served their electoral purpose.

The inaugural ceremonies were a little-noticed disaster for vice President-elect Joseph Estrada, the movie actor who has spent much of his professional life in front of cameras. Estrada stumbled through the ceremonies as if he had forgotten his cues, his lines and camera angles.

The President's Final Weeks (II)

For the last formal defense of her discredited regime, President Aquino chose the University of the Philippines as a forum. It was an extraordinarily weak, if characteristic, justification for all her failures: her predecessor was to blame. As reported in *Newsday* (6/19/92), she admitted that she had had no economic plans when she came to power:

I knew when I assumed office that poverty alleviation should be the primary concern of my administration. I must admit, however, that we didn't have a clear idea of how to go about it.

Responding to critics who charged her with incompetent government, she again blamed Marcos, claiming that the problems had been so large that the only way of dealing with them was by bits and pieces to patch up the structure. She lamented that her supporters had been a loose and mutually hostile coalition of forces, which would "pull me down. Some of the centrists, the traditional politicians, tried pulling me back to the norms and practices of a past already discredited before martial law."

She claimed to have removed those mutual suspicions by involving the military in civic projects such as disaster relief (apparently forgetting that this was

ELECTION DAY AND THE LONG COUNT

one of the Marcos regime's strong points, and one she had in fact fumbled badly).

Replying, her critic Cachó-Olivares (*Inquirer*, 6/20/92) objected that the President had been "weighed and found wanting". On her troubles with the military, "Aquino conveniently forgot to mention that at the time of her ascension to power, the military right, especially the RAM boys, were enamoured of her, as was a great majority of the citizenry," and that she had neglected a perfect opportunity:

A strong, decisive and determined leader would have seized that golden opportunity to consolidate power. He could have easily gained the support of both the left and the military right, which at that time held no power over her.

But she opted to openly display her distrust, if not dislike of the military, making it clear that the military officers aligned with Marcos were not to be trusted.

She succeeded in alienating them, as she well succeed in alienating the many who were supportive of her. She listened, not to the people, but to a whispering brigade that was nothing but a sycophantic lot, . . .

However, in a reply to such critics (probably written by Teddy Boy Locsin), who was back on board the sinking ship *Saint Cory*, she spoke tearfully at the AFP anniversary rites of "her soldiers", who had in earlier years not been supportive.

Olivares' *Inquirer* colleague, Conrado de Quiros, on June 23 called Cory's U.P. swan song a "goose song", and even denied that she had restored democracy:

If democracy has been restored at all, then we may seriously ask what Cory's contribution to it was. For try as we might, we are unable to connect democracy with vigilantes, rape and pillage, and a social inequality that has made us, according to the UNDP, one of the five most unstable countries in the world. Her defenders may imagine that her abject record in putting the nation back on its feet represents the failure of democracy. The rest of us who grope in the dark and prefer to curse it than light a candle, may very well ask: *What* democracy?

Leftist Congressman Bonifacio Gillego agreed (*Newsday*, 6/22/92) that Cory has restored democratic institutions, but that it was "just form, no substance". Robert Reed and Eileen Guerrero of the A.P. wrote that despite Cory's pieties, the poor were no better off after six years. This was too favorable a judgment. They were worse off. One of the achievements of the Marcos regime, the World Bank had conceded, was to improve the lot of the urban poor. If any one had benefited from Cory's regime, it was the rich and the well-connected, the media, and professionals, who except for the latter, were upper class. They talked about helping the poor, but concentrated on helping themselves.

Two days before she departed from the scene, President Aquino attended a Thanksgiving mass said by Cardinal Sin, and admitted she had made certain forgivable mistakes (*Chronicle*, 6/29/92):

For the first time in six years, President Aquino acknowledged and apologized for her administration's failure to live up to the Filipinos' expectations.

Mrs. Aquino said she was not prepared for the awesome tasks ahead of her

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

when people power catapulted her to the presidency in 1986.

She then asked forgiveness for her mistakes, particularly to people whom she had hurt deeply, saying all she wanted to do was to serve the people.

Cory's last week thus saw her piously admit some failures, but in other interviews, she also boasted of having "won all her fights"; and there was no denying that she had won her last battle—her anointed now sat in her place.

In fact, however, as the record of six plus years painfully demonstrated, Cory was not just a failure, but had headed an administration that was inferior to her predecessor's up to its last three years. She had entered political life as a saint, but left it as a sinner, one who had sowed dragon's teeth which it would now be her chosen successor's unenviable task to uproot. Still her dismissed pit bull spokesman Teddy Boy Locsin, restored to favor in the last weeks, could write ecstatically not only of her but her successor, his former deadly enemy. Despite the rain, he wrote (*Globe*, 7/1/92) the Inauguration

was a beautiful affair and the presence of outgoing President Corazon Aquino contributed immeasurably to making it so. While her old enemies in the press carped about her participation, it was evident as the ceremony unfolded that she and Ramos had to be there together. It had nothing to do with the lingering influence she may wield on his administration. But everything to do with what they both symbolize: an abiding commitment to democracy. Without her, a void would have appeared beside Ramos at this quintessentially symbolic moment in the life of our Republic. What would he have been walking up the grandstand alone, but the close victor of a bruising campaign? . . .

It was fitting that this man should appear with the woman for whom he fought; for together they represent the cause whose triumph would reach its apogee just before the conclusion of the ceremony: the peaceful passage of power in a democracy. He was there when she took power, she had to be there when he took it in his turn.

This rhapsody was composed by a clever wordsmith. It was intended to establish an image that would recapture the saintly glamor that he had had a large part in launching and to spread that mantle over her successor. (Maybe Teddy Boy would yet produce a Nobel Prize winner!) It would be churlish but accurate to remind readers that the man who composed this panegyric was the one who had publicly cursed General Ramos when he refused his "order" to turn his artillery on "his" building in 1987, but such is the nature of politics, in the Philippines as elsewhere. It makes a world of difference whether you are, or hope to be *in*, or are *out*.

L'Envoi

Three Years of Masquerade, Three of Failure, Six of Betrayal

In February 1986, Cory Aquino was acclaimed as the restorer of Philippine Democracy, a newly re-united nation, and the precursor of a more abundant life for her people. She did not disappoint her backers in what was called a restoration of democratic institutions, though her own contribution was minimal. All that was necessary was that Marcos be removed. With his departure, Philippine democratic institutions—Congress, the judiciary and media and academic freedom—sprang up spontaneously. All Mrs. Aquino had to do was to get out of the way, and those institutions were reborn overnight. It is therefore impossible to credit her for their revival, and she certainly eliminated none of the flaws in those institutions. The new constitution which her nominees devised reproduced all the defects of its predecessors and added new ambiguities, since the single-issue firebrands managed to incorporate most of their brainchildren into a document which bristled with inner contradictions, thus permitting the President to ignore any provision which stood in the way of what she preferred in policies or personnel. National unity remained an illusion in the face of the politics of *revanche*, and the gulf between rich and poor, governed and governors, yawned wider than ever.

Prominent among the policies heralded with fanfare and then abandoned were the recovery of national wealth plundered by the previous administration, land reform, ballyhooed as “the centerpiece” of her administration, already prepared plans for the strengthening of power generation, pledged government economy and austerity, improved disaster relief (which deteriorated), stricter control of loggers (they went unpunished) and improved relations, including a more favorable bases treaty, with the United States. She presided, instead, over the bases’ liquidation without any effective program for the utilization either of base territories or their personnel.

Cory’s early verbal *faux pas*—many serious—were covered up by admirers in the media and friendly enthusiasts, but there was no way friends could effectively conceal equally serious errors in policies, so instead she got rid of her critics, betraying the groups which, as a coalition, had brought her to power. Members of Laurel’s UNIDO, her adopted party, were dismissed from public employment by her minority leader Pimentel in the most flagrant example of the spoils system the country had ever witnessed. Then she removed her vice President, Laurel, from the Cabinet, though his UNIDO party had helped materially to elect her, depriving him not only of his promised post of “Prime Minister” but his Cabinet post as Foreign Secretary. Next, she turned on Juan Ponce Enrile, who had led the military mutiny which had made it possible for her civilian backers to take over first the streets and subsequently the Palace. Much of this intrigue was accomplished by her Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo, who was determined to manipulate the President into dependence on him and his net-

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

work of supporters, eliminating all vestiges of party loyalties other than his and her personal supporters. Enrile retired with surprising docility, but the military remained deeply disaffected and rebellious.

Hand in hand with the purge of the military went the campaign to build on Mrs. Aquino's prestige as a contemporary Joan of Arc, originally created by the international media, in a campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize, a campaign brain-trusted by Joker's equally jugular-oriented Teddy Boy Locsin, the President's speechwriter. Major progress was made, utilizing failed military *coups* to strengthen the Nobel Prize campaign.

After two years, there remained one area of influence not yet dominated by the Arroyo-Locsin axis. This was the financial elite, whose voice was Jimmy Ongpin. Joker Arroyo, moving with Iago-like cunning, used anti-Ongpin Cabinet members so totally to frustrate Ongpin that he committed suicide, Cory becoming the prisoner of the Executive Secretary and her speechwriter.

At this point, the Cojuangco family and its allies realized that it too was to be eliminated or made subject to the plotters, who were using Cory to accomplish a palace revolution. This was thwarted by an extraordinary and totally unlooked-for event. Objections were made to the Nobel Committee by dissatisfied members of the Human Rights coalition, whose spokesman and leader was Arroyo. This unexpected intercession derailed Cory's race for the Nobel Prize. The Cojuangco family reclaimed its hegemony, and Arroyo and Locsin were dumped, though several Arroyoistas survived. Nonetheless, by waving the bloody shirt of the Marcoses, Cory gradually reestablished her credentials with the Human Righters, who were transformed into the NGO's, a process encouraged by the U.S. government. The Cabinet became a cockpit, and Mrs. Aquino, with no program beyond "restoring democracy" and "recovering the Marcos plunder" daily lost credibility as her government and family showed themselves more interested in hijacking the Marcos wealth and clinging to its privileges in sequestered firms than in recovering Marcos loot for the National Treasury. The President's repeated pledges to convict the "Big Fish" corruptionists went unfulfilled, as most were her cronies or relatives.

Another "policy initiative"—land reform, referred to by government media flacks as a "centerpiece" of her program—was quickly discredited less by recalcitrant landowners than by crooks in her own government and the use of the issue as a political slogan rather than a program. Next, as department after department blundered, Mrs. Aquino simply fired the department heads and replaced them with equally ineffective Marcos-haters. This was too much for publisher "Chino" Roces, who had gathered the million-plus signatures that she had virtuously insisted on before accepting the challenge to run for President. Chino died heart-broken, and he was followed by other defectors like Lino Alcuaz, who had organized the politically effective funeral procession for the slain Ninoy Aquino.

Little by little, the Cojuangco family wagons had been drawn up around Malacañang to protect their privileges and frauds, like *jueteng*, casinos, and

customs corruption, which they had come to depend on, just as their predecessors had done. With brother Peping Cojuangco playing Rasputin, Cory herself became skilled in the use of the double-cross, preserving her family's dominant role in Philippine politics. The Nobel Prize gambit had failed, the Marcos billions were unrecoverable, and nothing remained but the traditional game of Philippine politics—patronage and privilege.

The traditional game required give-and-take with the Congress. The Speaker Ramon Mitra, *trapo par excellence*, played fairly, generally delivering Congressional backing for the President's programs, but receiving little or no reciprocal cooperation from the Palace. Meanwhile, her department heads failed, one after the other, to perform their duties, but she clung to them until, forced by public dissatisfaction with their performance, she replaced them with successors who were no better. In one case, that of power generation, the failure was so calamitous that by the time the 1992 election was held, the counting was frequently suspended by outages that were six to twelve hours long. Just as the failures in the departments of government had not disturbed her, however, the President ignored the breakdowns in the NPC plants until the spreading darkness forced her to act. Meanwhile, she spent what was left of her strength in campaigning, in opposition her own government party and Cardinal Sin, for her own Presidential candidate (the General who had imprisoned her husband), and opening several metropolitan traffic flyovers as evidence of her government's concrete accomplishments, which fortunately for her, could be dedicated in broad daylight.

In one area of government, disaster relief, Cory was charitably spared richly deserved abuse. When the S. S. *Doña Paz* sank with a loss of 3000 lives, no one was punished or even accepted responsibility. When an earthquake devastated Baguio, her government's relief efforts were fumbling and inadequate. When the Ormoc flood cost 8000 lives, her government found no one to blame, and the bodies were bulldozed into open pits. When Mt. Pinatubo erupted, most of the relief operation was bungled. . . After each of these tragedies, her government was unapologetic. She said her rosary, and her sponsor Cardinal Sin urged his flock to turn to the Almighty for consolation.

When she left the Presidency, Cory turned over to her successor a country which not only reflected a total failure to accomplish her proclaimed objectives, like land reform and a better life for the poor, or the recovery of looted wealth by her predecessor. It now consisted of a shambles of various departments of government, most of which had before her takeover discharged their duties effectively. Her chief "accomplishments" amounted to a series of blunders testifying not only to neglected opportunities, but the betrayal of those whom she had used and then flung aside: Laurel, Ponce Enrile, Ongpin, Roces, Orbos, Mitra, and Cardinal Sin were only the most prominent.

In departing, Mrs. Aquino elected her anointed, General Ramos, a tactic that promised protection to her family and its six years of acquisitions. General Ramos, a President elected by his predecessor with less than 24% of the voters,

FROM SAINT TO SINNER

was thus launched as a satellite of his predecessor. How he could possibly distance himself from her failures and the grip of Mrs. Aquino's relatives and cronies defied logic. How he could uncouple from the disastrous descent of his predecessor's government into chaos eluded the imagination. It required a leap of faith that even Blaise Pascal would have found intimidating.

Index

A

Abaya, Tony ²⁸³ 312, 326
 ACLU 27
 Adaza, Homobono 124
 Aguinaldo (Gov) 208
 Alejandro, Lean 156
 Allende (Pres), Salvador 22
 Alvarez (Sen), Heherson 80, 175
 Angara (Sen), Edgardo 121
 Anti-Americanism 281
 Aquino, Agapito 64, 81
 Aquino (Sen), Benigno, Jr.
 Character, 4, 49; Parentage and
 Childhood, 1-3; Korea, 4-8; Taruc
 Capture, 8-10; Courtship, 10-12;
 Mayor, 13-14; Governor, 155-18,
 USAID, Senator, 19 fn; *Balthazar*,
 21; Arrest, 24, Imprisonment, Court
 Martial, 22 ff.; Hnger strike, 33;
 Derian visit, 35; U.S. exile, 39 ff.;
 U.S. interviews: Dallas, 39, New
 York, 41; Detroit, 42; Washington, 43;
 Boston, 46; San Francisco, 51;
 Assassination, 63
 Aquino (Pres), Corazon
 Character, I; Parentage and Childhood,
 1-3; Family Planning, 13-14; Boston
 Sojourn, 58 ff.; Husband's assassina-
 tion, 63 ff.; becomes political, 64;
 Feminist reaction, 67 ff.; election
 campaign, 72; snap election, 74; first
 cabinet, 80; dismisses Enrile, 100;
 government performance, 102; second
 Cabinet, 119; May 87 elections,
 123; *parientes*, 127; abolishes Fil-Am
 friendship Day 135; Ferrer assassina-
 tion, 139; 1st State of the Nation
 Speech; 141; Cabinet reorganization,
 151; Bicol peninsula amputated, 160;
 loses Nobel award 1987, 164; Ongpin's
 death 165, Honasan's capture, 167, Jan.
 87 local elections, 171; reshuffles
 military commands, 173; says RAM is
 Olalia's murderer, 185, visits Europe
 198, Third State of the Nation, 200;

U.S. Phantoms save government 203;
 Revamps cabinet 207, calls for bounty
 hunters 208; "rule imperilled" 210
 celebrates 4th anniv. of Revolution
 212; snubs Def. Sec. Cheney 213;
 wars against *trapos* 223; Refuses
 passports to Cojuangcos 258; called
malas 260; appoints Orbos Exec.
 Sec. 262; sues Beltran 265; women
 appointees superior 269; 5th Anniver-
 sary Revolution 271; Goodbye speech
 292; Sixth Anniversary Revolution 312;
 blames U.S. 321; shows leadership 331;
 admits error 347; last weeks 350 ff.

Aquino, Melchor 126
 Arillo, Cecilio 161 fn, 167
 Armitage visit 217
 Arroyo, Joker 64, 82, 149, 154, 220, 288
 ASEAN Conference 167
 Azcuna, Adolf 268

B

Bernas (Fr.) 166, 186
 Babst-Vokey, Arlene 137, 155
 Baguio earthquake 229
 Baldwin, Roger 27
 Barican, Jerry 135, 142
~~Barros, James II~~
 Base negotiations 215, 251, 266, 271, 273
 treaty signed 298, rejected by Senate
 299 *Berngson, Alfred (Sept 1987) 259, 261*
 Bases, U.S. military 180
 Benigno, Teodoro 55, 191, 241
 Bhutto, Benazir 237
 Bigornia, Amante 134
 Bonner, Raymond 4, 77
 Bosworth (Amb), Stephen 101 ff.
 Boyle, Andrew II
 Burchette, Wm. 6
 Buscayno (Cmdr), Dante 16
 Barnes, Michael 317

C

Cacho-Olivares, Ninez 230
 Carunungan, Celso 131

"Cassandra" 85 ff.
Cawigan, Rosario 30 ff
Chambers, Whitaker 106
Chen, Richard (Bert - Min), 263
Cojuangco, Danding 200, 220, 329 ff.
COMELEC 133, 141 ff.

Communism 6, 104-110, 186
Constitutional Plebiscite 117

Corruption 132, 137, 211, 243
Crisostomo, Isabelo T. I. *Lovepussy, Raul 261*

Cruz, Neal 169

Crime and punishment 309

Cheating (elections): 124, 339

D

Davide Report 249

Daroy, Petronilo 139

Datiles, Charlotte 157

Daza, Julie 145, 155

De Leon, Lita Ramos 24

Del Rosario, Simeon 21

Diokno (Sen), Jose 26, 38, 66

Dona Paz shipwreck 170

Doronila, Amando 151, 164, 166

Dula 159

Dependency 231

Drug Bust shootout 236

Durano, Ramon 76

E

Economist (London) 192 *107,*

Enrile (Sen), Juan Ponce 100, 125, 141,
301, 326

Esclamado, Alex 54

Election Day (May 11, 1992) 337 ff.

ESTRADA, Senator, 196

F

Fallows, James 183, 237

Far Eastern Economic Review 153, 225

Femintern 111-114

Ferenbach (Gen), T. R. 6

Foreign Investment 253

G

Gatmaitan, Tony 70, 82, 124, 142

Gillego (Cong), Bonifacio 175

Guevara, Joe 170

Guingona (Sen), Teofisto 64, 121

Gulf War 234, 263

Gomez, Buddy 275

H

Helms (Sen), Jesse 138

Henares, Larry 17, 25, 313

Higgins, Marguerite 6

Honasan *Putsch* 145 ff, *22 ff.*

Huks 9-10

Huntington (Dr), Samuel 59

I

"Indonesian Model" 185

J

Jayme, Vicente 270

Joaquin, Nick 3, 4

Jose F. Sionil 156

K

Kabisig 229

Kalaw (Sen), Eva 18

Kalaw, Tirol L. I. 3

Kaplan (DCM), Philip 124, 145

Karnow, Stanley 45, 237

KMU (*Kilusan Mayo Uno*) 99

Komisar, Lucy 3, 58 fn

KILOS 204

L

Land Reform 130, 175, 214, 279

Lansdale (Col), Ed 9

Laurel (VP), Salvador 62, 80, 149, 159
193, 316

Legislature 189

Locsin, Teodoro, Jr. 81, 146, 230, *281*

M

Mathay, Mel 249

Maceda (Sen), Ernesto 63, *293*

McIlwaine, Sandra 43

Index (Revised)

A

Abaya, Tony 283, 312, 326
 ACLU 27
 Adaza, Homobono 124
 Aguinaldo (Gov) 208
 Alejandro, Lean 156
 Allende (Pres), Salvador 22
 Alvarez (Sen), Heherson 80, 175
 Angara (Sen), Edgardo 121
 Anti-Americanism 281
 Aquino, Agapito (Butz) 64, 81
 Aquino (Sen), Benigno, Jr.
 Character, 4, 49; Parentage and
 Childhood, 1-3; Korea, 4-8; Taruc
 Capture, 8-10, Courtship, 10-12;
 Mayor, 13-14; Governor, 155-18,
 USAID, Senator, 19fn; *Balthazar*,
 21; Arrest, 24, Imprisonment, Court
 Martial, 22 ff.; Hunger strike, 33;
 Derian visit, 35; U.S. exile, 39 ff.;
 U.S. interviews: Dallas, 39, New
 York, 41; Detroit, 42; Washington, 43;
 Boston, 46; San Francisco, 51;
 Assassination, 63
 Aquino (Pres), Corazon
 Character, I; Parentage and Childhood,
 1-3; Family Planning, 13-14; Boston
 Sojourn, 58 ff.; Husband's assassina-
 tion, 63 ff.; becomes political, 64;
 Feminist reaction, 67 ff.; election
 campaign, 72; snap election, 74; first
 cabinet, 80; dismisses Enrile, 100;
 government performance, 102; second
 Cabinet, 119; May 87 elections,
 123; *parientes*, 127; abolishes Fil-Am
 friendship Day 135; Ferrer assassina-
 tion, 139; 1st State of the Nation
 Speech; 141; Cabinet reorganization,
 151; Bicol peninsula amputated, 160;
 loses Nobel award 1987, 164; Ongpin's
 death, 165, Honasan's capture, 167, Jan.
 87 local elections, 171; reshuffles
 military commands, 173; says RAM is
 Olalia's murderer, 185, visits Europe
 198, Third State of the Nation, 200;

U.S. Phantoms save government 203;
 Revamps cabinet 207, calls for bounty
 hunters 208; "rule imperilled" 210
 celebrates 4th anniv. of Revolution
 212; snubs Def. Sec. Cheney 213;
 wars against *trapos* 223; Refuses
 passports to Cojuangcos 258; called
malas 260; appoints Orbos Exec.
 Sec. 262; sues Beltran 265; women
 appointees superior 269; 5th Anniver-
 sary Revolution 271; Goodbye speech
 292; Sixth Anniversary Revolution 312;
 blames U.S. 321; shows leadership 331;
 admits error 347; last weeks 350 ff.

Aquino, Melchor 126
 Arillo, Cecilio 161 fn, 167
 Armitage visit 217
 Arroyo, Joker 64, 82, 149, 154, 220, 288
 ASEAN Conference 167
 Azcuna, Adolf 268
 Assassinations 63, 157, 192, 199, 254

B

Babst-Vokey, Arlene 137, 155
 Baguio earthquake 229
 Baldwin, Roger 27
 Barican, Jerry 135, 142
 Barnes, Michael 308, 319
 Barros, James *ii*
 Base negotiations 215, 251, 266, 271, 273
 treaty signed 298, rejected by Senate
 299
 Bases, U.S. military 180
 Beltran, Luis 265
 Benigno, Teodoro 55, 191, 241
 Bengzon, Alfred (Sec. Health) 259
 Bernas (Fr.) 166
 Bhutto, Benazir 237
 "Big Bird" 198
 Bigornia, Amante 134
 Bonner, Raymond 4
 Bosworth (Amb), Stephen 101 ff.
 Boyle, Andrew *ii*
 Burchette, Wm. 6
 Buscayno (Cmdr), Dante 16
 Brownouts 324, 330

C

Cacho-Olivares, Niñez 230
Carunungan, Celso 131
"Cassandra" 85 ff.
Cawigan, Rosario 30 ff
Chambers, Whitaker 106
Cheating (election) 124, 339
Cheney (U.S. Def) visit 213
Clerical party 296
Cojuangco, Danding 200, 220, 329 ff.
COMELEC 133, 141 ff.
Communism 6, 104-110, 186
Constantino, Renato 288
Constitutional Plebiscite 117
Corruption 132, 137, 221, 243
Council of Trent 130
Crime and Punishment 309
Crisostomo, Isabelo T. i
Cruz, Neal 169

D

Daroy, Petronilo 139
Datiles, Charlotte 157
Davide Report 249
Daza, Julie 145, 155
De Leon, Lita Ramos 24
Del Rosario, Simeon 21
Dependency 231
Derian (Patt) visit 35
Diokno (Sen), Jose 26, 38, 66
Doña Paz shipwreck 170
Doronila, Amando 151, 164, 166
Drug Bust shootout 236
Dula 159
Durano, Ramon 76

E

Earthquake (7 / 16/ 90) 231
Economist (London) 192
Election Day (May 11, 1992) 337 ff.
Enrile (Sen), Juan Ponce 100, 125, 142,
301, 326
Esclamado, Alex 54
Estrada (Sen) 295

F

Fallows, James 183, 237
Far Eastern Economic Review 153, 225
Felix, Alfonso, Atty. 111
Femintern 111-114
Ferenbach (Gen), T. R. 6
Ferrer, Jaime 139
Foreign Investment 253

G

Gatmaitan, Tony 70, 82, 124, 142
Gillego (Cong), Bonifacio 175
Gomez, Buddy 275
Guevara, Joe 170
Guingona (Sen), Teofisto 64, 121
Gulf War 234, 263

H

Helms (Sen), Jesse 138
Henares, Larry 17, 25, 131
Higgins, Marguerite 6
Honasan *Putsch* 145 ff., 202 ff.
Huks 9-10
Hunger strikes 33, 46, 324
Huntington (Dr), Samuel 59

I

"Indonesian Model" 185

J

Jayme, Vicente 270
Joaquin, Nick 3, 4, 16, 18
Jose, F. Sionil 156

K

Kabisig 229
Kalaw (Sen), Eva 18
Kalaw, Tirol. 3

Kaplan (DCM), Philip 124, 145
Karnow, Stanley 45, 237
KILOS 204
KMU (*Kilusan Mayo Uno*) 99
Komisar, Lucy 3, 58 fn

L

Land Reform 130, 175, 214, 279
Lansdale (Col), Ed 9
Laurel (VP), Salvador 62, 80, 149, 159
193, 316
Locsin, Teodoro, Jr. 81, 146, 230, 281, 327

M

Maceda (Sen), Ernesto 63
McIlwaine, Sandra 43
Magdalena, Aurora 57
Magsanoc, Leticia Jimenez 69
Magsaysay (Pres), R. 9
Magsino (Gen), Florencio 168
Malas syndrome 260
Mamot, Pat 46
Manahan (Sen), M. 8
Mangahas, Mahar 131, 176
Mangahas, Malou 159, 167 fn
Manglapus (Sen), Raul 25, 66, 121, 266
(bravura speech) 268, "plot" to kill
Honasan 301
Manne, Rbt. (Prof) 6 fn
Marcos (Pres), Ferdinand E. 54, 62, 73,
116, 134, 136, 190
Marcos, Imelda wins U.S. case 225, 256
cand. for Pres. 304 ff.
Martinez, Manuel F. 2, 4
Mata, Nestor 155
Mathay, Mel 249
Media "revolution" 77
Meehan, Robert C. 243
Mendiola 115
Mindanao Rebellion 248
Mitra (Spkr), Ramon 80, 148, 234
Monsod, Solita 194
Moral Rearmament 74 fn.

Morales, Horatio (Boy) 109
Mother Jones 51
Mydans, Seth 71

N

NAMFREL 75-76, 125, 127
Nations, Richard 120
Neal Ernest E. 17
Newsome (Amb), David 35
Nobel Peace Prize 1, 122
Norman, Herbert 110
NPA 228, 292, 311

O

Ocampo (Gen), Eugenio 157
Olalia, F. 99
Ongpin (Min), Jaime 120, 165, 358
Ople, Blas 198, 203, 252, 255, 293, 318
Opus Dei, 120
Ormoc flood 303
Oyson, "Don Pepe" salvaged 214

P

Palma (Judge), Cecilia 67
Pascal, Blaise 184, 360
Paterno (Sen), Vicente 121
Pauker (Prof), Guy 59
PCGG 153, 192, 278
Peace Corps (US) 26
Pimentel (Sen), N. 121
Pinatubo (Mt) eruption 277
Platt (Amb), Nicholas 152, 174, 232, 290
Power failures 323, 343
Presidential campaign (1992) 283-351
Pye (Dr), Lucian 59

Q

Quinn (DCM), Kenneth 152, 219

R

RAM (Reform Army Movement) 73, 168
189, 202, 299
Rama, Nap 261, 306
Ramos Inaugural 135
Red Scorpion Group (RSG) 319
Roces (Chino), Joaquin 72
Romulo (Sen), Alberto 121
Roppongi property 211
Rosca, Ninotchka 129
Rowe (Col), James assassination 191

S

Saguisag (Sen), Rene 80, 121
Salanga, Freddie 77, 143, 182, 233
Salas, Rafael 58, 66, 182
Salonga (Sen), Jovito 64, 66, 121, 235
Sanchez (Min), Augusto 80
Santiago, Miriam 195, 307 ff.
Scandals (Garchitorena) 193 (Big Bird)
196, (Sweepstakes) 224 (Beautify Life) 275
Shahani (Sen), Leticia Ramos 121
Sheehy, Gail 111
Sicam, Paulynn 137, 177
Simons, Lewis, Jr. 118
Sin (Cardinal), Jaime 78, 121, 131, 244, 294,
326, 332
Soliven, Max 116, 184, 323, 341
Solomon, Richard (U.S. Amb), 333
Stonehill, Harry 164
Straight, Michael ii
Sycip, Cynthia 116, 137

T

Tadeo, Jaime 115
Tañada (Sen), Wigberto 123
Taruc, Luis 8
Task Force Detainees (TDF) 108
Tatad, Francisco 25, 183
TIME 343

U

Unger (Amb), Leonard 59
U. P. Assessment of gov't. 209

V

Values (Filipino) 181 ff.
Villanueva, Hector 134

W

Wakaoji kidnapping 120
Wisner (U.S. Amb), 290, 339, 344

Y

Yellow Army 215
Yorac, Haydee 68, 341
YOU (Young Officers Union) 301

Z

Zobel, Jaime 74

Magdalena, Aurora 57
 Magsanoc, Leticia Jimenez 69
 Magsaysay (Pres), R. 9
 Magsino (Gen), Florencio 168
 Mamot, Pat 46
 Manahan (Sen), M. 8
 Meehan, Robert C. 243
 Mangahas, Mahar 131, 176
 Mangahas, Malou 159, 167 fn
 Manglapus (Sen), Raul 25, 66, 121, 266, **277**
 268

Manne, Rbt. (Prof) 6 fn
 Marcos (Pres), Ferdinand E. 54, 62, 73,
 116, 134, 136, 190
 Marcos, Imelda wins U.S. case 225, 256
 cand. for Pres. 304 ff.
 Mindanao Rebellion 248
 Martinez, Manuel F. 2, 4
 Mata, Nestor 155
 Media 77
 Mendiola 115
 Mitra (Spkr), Ramon 80, 148, 234
 Monsod, Solita 194
 Moral Rearmament 74 fn.
Mother Jones 51
 Mydans, Seth 71

N

NAMFREL 75-76, 125, 127
 Nations, Richard 120
 Neal Ernest E. 17
 Newsome (Amb), David 35
 Nobel Peace Prize 1, 122
 NPA 228, 292, 311

O

Ocampo (Gen), Eugenio 157
 Olalia, F. 99
 Ongpin (Min), Jaime 120, ¹⁶⁵358
 Ople, Blas 198, 252, 266, 293, 318 ²²²
 Oyson, "Don Pepe" salvaged 214
 Ormoc flood 303
Orbis, Oscar, 284

P

Pinatubo (Mt.) eruption 277
 Palma (Judge), Cecilia 67
 Pascal, ~~Henri~~ 184

Paterno (Sen), Vicente 121
 Pauker (Prof), Guy 59
 PCGG 153, **278**, ~~182~~
 Peace Corps (US) 26
 Pimentel (Sen), N. 121
 Platt (Amb), Nicholas 152, 174, 232, 290
 Pye (Dr), Lucian 59
 Presidential campaign (1992) 283-351
 Power failures 323, 343

Q

Qiunn (DCM), Kenneth 152, 219

R

Red Scorpion Group (RSG) 319
 RAM (Reform Army Movement) 73, 168
 189, 202, 299)
Rama, R. 261, 306
 Röces (Chino), Joaquin 72
 Romulo (Sen), Alberto 121
 Rosca, Ninotchka 129
 Rowe (Col), James assassination 191
 Roppongi property 211
 Ramos Inaugural 135
Romero, Rodolfo 27
Rosen, R.M. 71
S

Saguisag (Sen), Rene 80, 121
 Salanga, Freddie 77, 143, 233
 Salas, Rafael 58, 66, 182
 Salonga (Sen), Jovito 64, 66, 121
 Sanchez (Min), Augusto 80
 Shahani (Sen), Leticia Ramos 121
 Sicam, Paulynn 137, 177
 Simons, Lewis, Jr. 118
 Sin (Cardinal), Jaime 78, 121, 131, ²⁴⁴294, 296,
 326, 332 *Shady, Paul 111*
 Soliven, Max 116, 184, 323, 341
 Stonehill, Harry 164
 Straight, Michael II
 Sycip, Cynthia 116, 137
 Scandals (Garchitorena) 193 (Big Bird)
 196, (Sweepstakes) 244 (Beauty Life)
 275
 Santiago, Miriam 195, 307 ff.

T

Tadeo, Jaime 115

Tanada (Sen), Wigberto 123
Taruc, Luis 8
Tatad, Francisco 25, 183, 264
TIME 343

U

Unger (Amb), Leonard 59
U. P. Assessment of gov't. 209

V

Values (Filipino) 181 ff.
Villanueva, Hector 134, 259,
Villenas, Bernardo, 279

W

Wakaoji kidnaping 120

Y

Yellow Army 215
Yorac, Haydee 68, 341
YOU (Young Officers Union) 301

Z

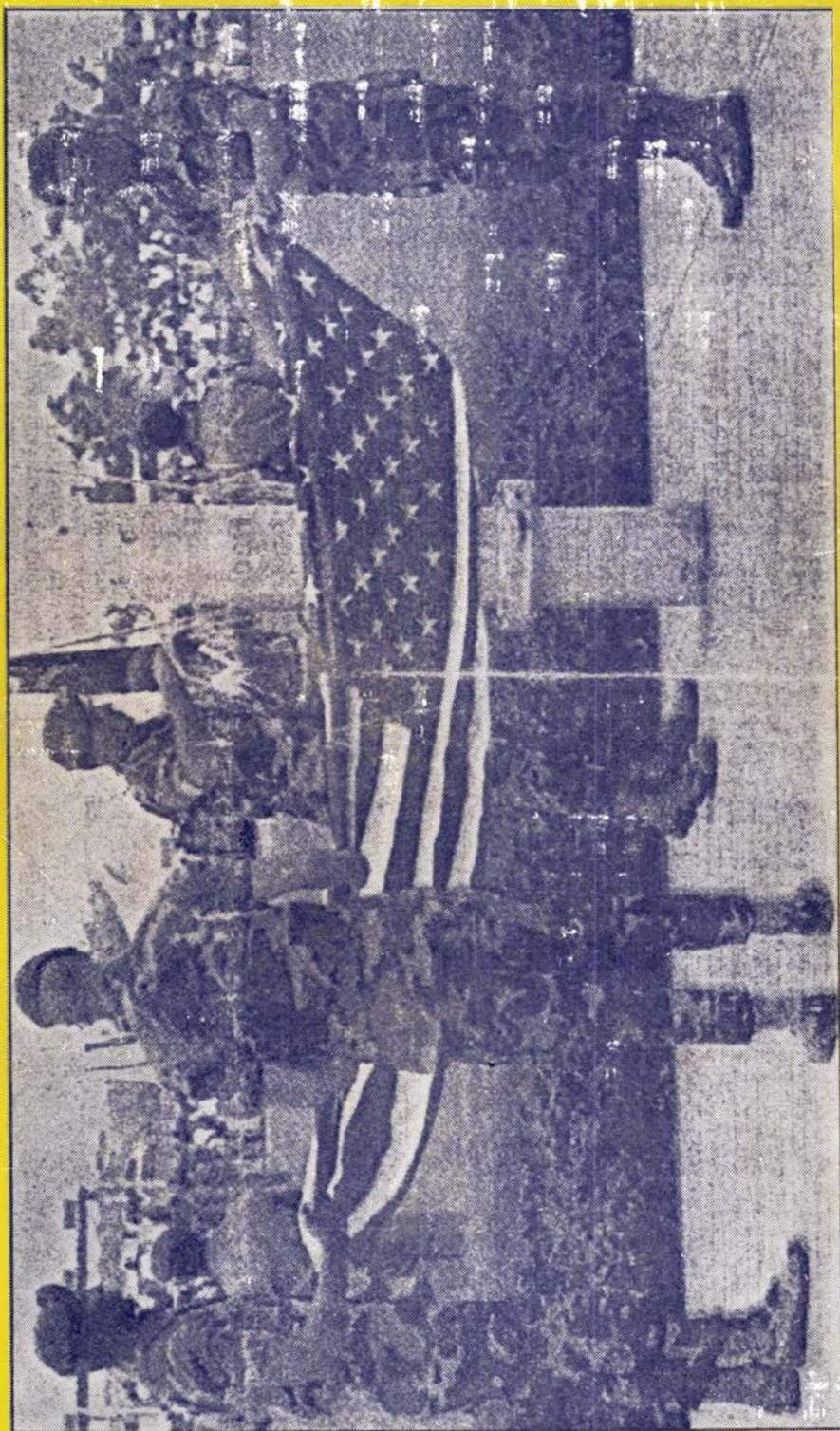
Zobel, Jaime 74,



PRAYING FOR MORE MIRACLE

President Aquino is flanked by Cardinals Sin and Vid
www.PippineAmericanHistory.com





Agence France-Presse

A U.S. military honor guard at Clark Air Base in the Philippines folds an American flag after it was lowered there for the final time.